

The Crooked Path

A Journal of the Nameless Art

Issue 2: Summer 2008

with articles by

Robin ARTISSON

Veronica Cummer

ERIC de VRIES

Peter Paddon

Steven Posch

Radomir Ristic

R.J. Thompson

Raven Womack

M.V. Wragg

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Marilyn "Istari" R.



PENDRAIG

2 **So here it is... you've all been saying**
 5 **very nice things about issue one, so I**
 5 **hope you like issue two just as much!**

6 Our first issue has already been the num-
 12 ber one Pagan book on Amazon, and that is
 17 a trend I'd like to continue with this issue,
 21 and the ones that come after. Don't forget,
 26 if you have an article, poem, picture or even
 a regular column idea, you can send it to us
 at submissions@pendraigpublishing.com,
 and if it looks good, it will go into an issue
 of CPJ.

29 In the winter issue, we will be debuting a
 33 travel column, covering places of interest
 35 for the Pagan traveller. It promises to be
 an inspiring read. I'm also hoping to get an
 article from Wendy Rule, the Pagan Jazz/
 Rock diva from Australia. She's touring the
 US again in the fall, and we are organizing
 a concert for her in Los Angeles, so I will
 write a review of that for the winter issue.

44 New books from Pendraig this summer -
 47 apart from this brans spanking new issue of
 CPJ, of course - are The Flaming Circle by
 Robin Artisson, Hedge-Rider by Eric De Vr-
 49 ies, and the long awaited Balkan Traditional
 50 Witchcraft by Radomir Ristic. A bestseller
 in his native Serbia, this book is being pub-
 lished for the first time in English.

52 If there are any budding book reviewers out
 there, I would love a regular book review
 column in CPJ. Remember, we are hoping
 to start paying our contributors next year,
 once circulation makes that viable.

The Crooked Path Journal, Issue 2, Summer 2008.
Edited by Peter Paddon, published by Pendraig
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 ISBN 978-0-9796168-8-4

ARTEMISIA

by Eric De Vries

“Servant and Spirit of the Moon, Green spirit of the Spirit-Hunt that rides the heavenly star-track. From the dark waters of Elphame your roots grow, and to the jewel in the midnight sky do your branches reach. In between stand I to break your branches and gather your spirit; Artemisia, grant me your soul!”

The plant usually known as mugwort and its close brother *absinthium* commonly referred to as wormwood has strong, shamanic properties that go back to great Antiquity. For both its chemical and magical value mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) and wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*) alike are renowned.

Since times long forgotten mugwort has had culinary and magical uses. For example it is often used in the kitchen. Though harmless in normal doses, mugwort can be considered ‘poisonous’, and in the illegal drink absinth wormwood is the major ingredient. Although recent studies have lifted the ban on the drink in some European countries, it is still an infamous and legendary drink that is said to produce visions and a heightened state of creativity. You could sometimes see bohemian artist drinking absinth to boost their creativity.

The major active chemical in both mugwort and wormwood is Thujon. When prepared in the right way – how to do this will be discussed later – it can produce a heightened state of clarity, that is, indeed, useful for the artist as well as the Witch. In higher doses it can even produce hallucinations, especially when combined with alcohol. However, this isn’t all for free as mugwort and wormwood are considered poisonous.

Another useful and to certain people invaluable property is that of lucid dreaming: when employed just before one goes to sleep the participant finds himself in dreams where he or she can act and think as if awake. Although the Witch already has several of such dreams a night, the use of Artemisia helps the Witch to remember these dreams. To the use of this one specific ritual is known which involves making what looks like a “dream-catcher”, but is in fact a reversal of this commercial tourist-focussed object. The Witch goes to a local hawthorn and after bringing proper sacrifice the sorcerer or sorceress cuts of a easily-bend branch with a fork in the middle. The fork is stripped of its bark and then the two horns of the fork are bended towards each other and bound together as to create a circular gateway. Following this the Witch gathers two sets of stems with enough leaves on it and wraps these around the hawthorn-circle. Then certain symbols are inscribed upon the piece of hawthorn and the entire thing is hung above the bed where the Witch will be sleeping – pray to the Dame before you go to bed and maybe you’ll visit her in the dreamtime.

The name ‘artemisia’ itself goes back to Classical Greece where the goddess of the moon and hunting, Artemis, was revered. In fact, the name Artemisia comes from this famous

goddess who was revered by the Romans as Diana – the same figure that appears in the Canon Episcopi as the goddess of the pagans and leader of the Witches. Her sacred goats fancied the stems of Artemisia. In this respect Artemisia is intimately connected to lunar workings and its silver leaves reflect the moonlight as if it was out of the moon itself.

In the north mugwort was connected to the Goose, the totem-animal of twilight and spirit flight. In Germany mugwort was called ‘goose-wort’ when culinary applied. Since times immemorial the goose has been associated with Dame Holda and her followers the Witches, in fact she was also referred to as Mother Goose. Intimately connected to this is a ritual enacted by northern-european shamans wherein they would kill a goose for the retreating nature-spirits and rub it with mugwort, this allowing its active ingredients to be assumed by the goose-fat. Following the fat was extracted from the goose and then used in to initiate spirit-flight.

Creating an ointment from mugwort or wormwood is in fact not too hard. When simply using olive oil and leaving a handful of dried mugwort (or wormwood) to soak in it for a month or two, you’ll have a perfect Artemisia-ointment. However, other herbs can be added to enhance its effect; calamus, holy herb and silverweed can be very useful.

Esoterically mugwort functions as Guardian of the Door and is gate through which the Witch either decides to descend down the world-tree and explore the mysteries of Elphame or visit the Queen of the Winds in the heavenly realms. In effect, Artemisia is the Great Ally in the alchemical union between the spirit of the Dame represented by the Moon, the Levana, and the Witch by magical transferral to the aqua vitae which is then ingested. As rightly discussed by Cochrane these waters of life are impregnated with a sacred herb, though not Amunita Muscaria.

The Witch begins by looking for a large open space, preferably near a large body of water. He or she begins by bringing the usual offerings to the guardians of the land and the corpse-ways. Following this a sacrifice in the form of the houzele is brought to the White Lady. As these things are basic and before the candidate is ready and able to enact this rite he or she should already be familiar with these workings. Following this the corpse ways are sought and laid out corresponding to the draconian roads of the starry heavens.

Though some authors have extensively dealt with the corpse-ways and how to invoke them. Although I can’t speak for all traditional Witches and hedgewitches alike, it is held within Witchcraft that at certain points several so-called spirit-roads meet. In the old days a lot of physical roads would coincide with these spirit-roads, which are, like the name says, roads for spirits. However, in the modern day humanity has grown numb to such delicate affairs of the spirit-world and so Witches had to adapt and learn the skills to find these roads.

However, we are looking for the spirits of the heavens and therefore there is no use in finding the spirit-roads of the earth, we should focus upon the star-roads along which the Spirit Hunt of Dame Holda travels. Take some water out of the large body of water nearby, if you don’t have such a feature at your disposal you should bring your own water. Bless it

in the name of the Pale Lady inside the earth and ask to her to make it into a “medium of spirits”. Following this you mark a road leads the north and then another one to the milky way from which Azazel and his cohorts descended. Another road runs to the west, where the sun has travelled beyond the edge of the earth and the last one runs to the moon. Some of these roads may coincide depending upon your location – I advise you not to lay them out two times.

After this the spirit will be gathering slowly, this is the time to sit in the middle and go in to trance. Witches have used troy-lines inscribed in stones or sigils that have some mystical quality but the most favourite and most widely-used is the flying ointment, of which I just gave you a recipe.

When the Witch is in a solid trance he or she starts the actual rite. This is done by placing the cup in the middle of the four roads and fill it with the aqua vitae – this is usually water to which Artemisia is added and then boiled, when cooled down a large amount of honey is added. Following this, a circle of Artemisia is laid out around the cup, most preferably this circle should be wider than your own height but the amount of Artemisia you have at your disposal might influence the circle’s length.

Ultimately the rite comes to the invocation of the moon-spirit and calling it down to earth. In fact, this ritual is a true Drawing Down the Moon, not a drawing down the goddess. When the circle is laid out fully and the corps-roads are open, a wand made out of willow is hold up to the starry heavens. When stripped from its bark willows shines like the stars themselves, and because of its watery nature it can truly function as a medium of ghosts while at teh same time corresponding to the Moon and the Pale Lady of the Misty Waters. With this wand held up to the sky the moon is invoked:

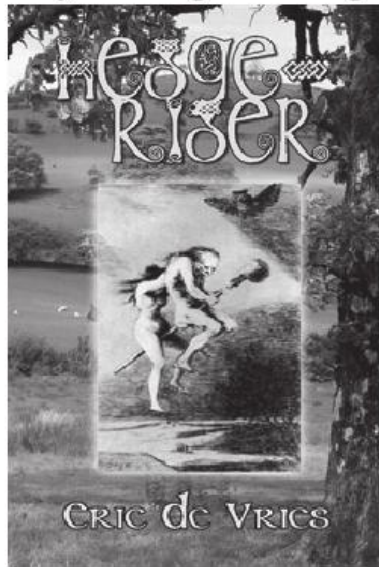
**Sacred spirit, levana, genii of the pale lady’s light,
Who watches the journey of Witches;
And guards the road of the Spirit Rade,
Ever watching, ever glowing, ever waning,
You, Artemisia, Spirit of the Moon,
By the grace of our Beloved Lady of the Rose;
I ask you, fill my circle with your soul,
And descend from the heavens to teach us your wisdom!**

Now the Witch starts to pace around the circle, treading the mill of the cosmic cycles. Slowly, but steadily, the mill starts to roll, following the paces of the Witch. With utmost determination and concentration the Witch raises the powers from the deep below, the Lady and Her Wolves. Then, when the mill runs steadily, the wand is lowered calling once more to the spirit of the moon:

**Beautiful Lady of the Starry Heavens,
Levana, Artemisia, descend from thy shining throne!**

The chant is repeated many times until the wand points at the cup in the middle. At this time the Alchemy of Artemisia and the Dark Mother becomes a fact and you the spirit of the double-faced Queen is embedded in the Aqua Vitae, the Vinum Sabbati standing in the middle of the circle. Drink it.

Eric De Vries is the author of Hedge-Rider: Witches and the Underworld, which is a re-interpretation of (Hedge-)Witchery. Drawing from an extensive historical, folkloric and mythological body it re-attributes and re-defines Witchery as a Heathen Cult centred around the journey to the Underworld and contact with the Unseen. With the insights into Cosmology, Philosophy and Practice this book provides a working body of Heathen Witch-lore, designed to transform the essence of humanity in something greater through contact with our Fetch and the Underworld itself. Recently released by Pendraig Publishing.



Bag of Stones by Steven Posch

Well, old Bull's got his bag of stones
from off that mountain as he lives on,
and them do tell how as he sows the world
with them like corn in field. Damn bag
don't go empty now, no mind
how many be took out. Times he stops
and sets himself up rings, like Se'en
Stones out to Begmore; times he lines
up longrows like them Marchstones
over Rigbury. Or mood'll take him
and it's three, four all in a place
together, big one over top: makes
himself a seat, he do, and don't he have
a rest. Them's the doing places.
And hasn't old bag got hole in bottom,

and whiles and whiles old stone comes
poking his way on out, and down
he falls and stands up nice as nice,
and there's your lonesome longstone
of the field. He give a name to each
whenas he sets him up, they say, and back
when I were lad old people knew them,
every one. He must have told them, see—
he do—and they remembered, as you might
suppose. These days nobody knows
but handful, me no more than next.
And that's not right, now: every stone
a name and none to know. Them's sorry
times. But who's to say he might not
take it in his head to tell those names
again? He might just do, and who's
to say, old Bull and his bag of stones?
And there's a tale now, surely.

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Balkan Traditional Witchcraft by Radomir Ristic

The Craft of the Balkans is a classic form of old European Witchcraft. It is the product of the cultural heritage of various nations from that soil. When we speak about the Balkan nations, we must understand that they have deep roots in the past from a foundation made of many tribes, and among them are Illyrians, Thracians, Dacians, Paeones, and many other smaller groupings. Then, we could include the Celts, Romans, Slavs and finally, the Turks. Wars, migrations, and trade resulted in mixing their genes and cultures. We also should not disregard the influence of adjacent nations, like Greece for instance.

Because of this, today we have one general combination of the different elements that together forms the Balkan system. We do not like to use the term “Serbian Witchcraft” because this same form of Witchcraft you can find in Monte Negro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and even in Romania and Bulgaria. Of course, the dominant population in those countries are descendents of southern Slavs, except when we talk about Romania. However, we will talk mostly about Witchcraft from the territory of Serbia.

Over the centuries, southern Slavs became the dominant population in the territory of the Balkans. When southern Slavs came to the Balkans, they did not have a polytheistic pantheon and developed paganism. Instead they had something which anthropologists named “developed demonology”. This is a level of development of folk beliefs which antecede paganism and polytheism, both of which have pantheons. Southern Slavs do not have a pantheon like their relatives in the north. They came to the Balkans in about the 6th century and very shortly after that Christianity overcast that region. Because of this, southern Slavs never had an opportunity to develop their pagan beliefs to another level. Their religious system was an amalgam of animism and the cult of ancestors. They believed in spirits of nature, spirits of fate, spirits of death, superior forces, demons, etc. Their basic methodology and religious practices were based on folk paganism and shamanistic rites.

The system itself finalized its development during the middle Ages under the great influence of Bogumilian the Heretic. It has become a mixture of folk paganism and heretical Christianity, with shamanistic methodology. It is very important to note that Balkan Traditional Witchcraft has historical continuity. It has survived in rural regions of the country, mostly to the east and south of Serbia. It survived because the Orthodox Church and the secular courts had never instigated a “witch hunt” in this part of Europe, industrialisation came very late and these areas were very economically undeveloped. Two other things are also important. The first one is that the Serbs endured 600 years under Turkish occupation. The Turks controlled the Orthodox Church, because of its political power, but they did not have an interest in what the peasants did. The second thing is that after the Turkish occupation, there was a small period of time before communists started to rule. Serbian communism was “soft”, with a “human face” as some historians describe it - the Serbian people’s life was materially good, but without much intellectual and religious freedom. Again, the communists did not allow Orthodox Church to have any influence on the people, but nobody cared what peasants did in their villages.

Because of all of this, we can find “real” Witches in the Balkans even today. When we use the term “real” Witch, we do not mean to offend anybody. We just want to “emphasize” that these persons are from rural regions, that they do not use the internet, do not read books about Witchcraft and do not speak other languages. Therefore, they do not know anything about that subject from all over the world. The bottom line is, they do not have any reason to lie about their traditions. Besides that, in the Balkans we have the opportunity to read many books that were written by historians, ethnologists and folklorists. The first ones were published before World War II. Today we also have an opportunity to watch documentary films about them, or even visit them and talk. We have visited some of them, after we have watched them on TV and found out which village they were from.

However, we must be careful. The main reason for this is that we have Cunning Folk and folklore magic too. Cunning Folk just practice a pragmatic magic. They are not initiated, they do not use the common Witches’ tools or ritual trance and they do not have a complete system or organized cult. Aside from that, we have folk magic and peasants who celebrate seasonal festivals, practise folk magic, who are mostly agrarian and love magic. Their magic is a mixture of folk paganism leftovers (spirit of nature, demons of vegetation etc.) and

Orthodox Christianity. For instance, in many cases the priests do rituals in the vineyard or in the field. On some Christian holidays, peasants do that alone.

In Serbia, we have several Witches' traditions. In the East of Serbia there are ethnos Vlachs, living together with Serbs, although speaking a different language, for whom there is still no explanation from scientists about who they are exactly. Some think that they are Romanized Slavs, some that they are Turks with which the Romans or Slavs crossed, some think that they are Dachas, Romans and some even mention Celts that lived in the Balkans. However, no one really knows.

They are orthodox, but believe in Lucifer and Diana (probably leftovers from the Romans) and that is some kind of sub-religion for them. Lucifer is identified with Venus and considered to be the Psychopomp, God that leads the dead to the light. He has his own Witch cult in this region. The central place for the cult is in the national park. In it we can find two important things. One is the "Rock Gate", the second is the big tree, one of which is Lucifer. They call him "Danica" in the Serbian language, "Morning star", or in Vlachian "Lushyafur"-Lucifer, which means the same thing. The Rock Gate represents a portal from underworld. At this place, folk perform an old ritual sending gifts to the dead.

Through this gate a small river passes by. When water passes through the gate, it becomes "magical". However, if you don't have permission from Lucifer you can't use (take) that water, because something terrible will happen to you, this is what they believed. Because of that, only Witches take water from that place and use it in their rituals. They all are solitary Witches. Once each year they must go to a tree in the forest and renew their "contract" with him. He usually wants something in return, so they do what he wants. When they go to that tree for the first time, they receive some kind of initiation. Of course, they can contact him after that whenever they want. However, the minimum is once a year. The first person who wrote about that cult was the ethnologist Paun Es Durlic.

In the same territory, some Witches make contact with trio of women that they call three Maria's or three Maras. She is often represented as saint Maria, but when we see the rituals they performed we understand that that it doesn't have many similarities with Christianity.

Also in the same territory we have Muma Padurii, which in translation means the Mother of the Forest. She exists in Rumania (the border is the Danube) in the Dachas pantheon, but there she is very different in description. In north-east Serbia she is called the Great Witch or the Witch of the Forest. She is more the great spirit of the forest than a Goddess, in the literary sense, which shows how old is she. In myths, she is a protector of nature, animals, women and children, crossroads and roads. She appears naked or in a transparent white dress with her hair down. Sometimes she turns into animals and is sexually lustful. She has two faces-dark and light. Sometimes she's a gentle beautiful woman, and sometimes cruel, and then she's ugly.

When she's cruel, she has a magic knowledge that she rarely shares. The people are afraid of her, but the Witches contact her daily because they are her chosen ones. Who is she really, it's hard to say, but as we know her name is a typical Serbian name-Mara so she can be the old Slavic Goddess of Death and Winter, Mara. She is also called Saint Maria and some of the rituals are performed before the Icon of Saint Maria.

Vlachian Witches work with Tartor too, Great Spirit of Water, who is considered to be a lover of the Mother of the Forest. He lives in the water and looks like an old dwarf. He has goat legs and ears, horns and a big nose. However, they consider him to be very dangerous so avoid contacting him.

In the territory of central, north and south Serbia, the God is dominant, but also goddesses represented like Saint Petka-Paraskeva or Saint Evdokia. She is the same Goddess represented like an old woman in black. Ethnologists connect her to the Slavic Mokosa, but they are wrong. She is simply called Grandmother and she is the Slavic Baba Yaga. Great spirit of Death and Arousal, the one that tempts, but also rewards.

Her Holiday is March the 14th. It is very amusing when people celebrate it (because it is a Christian Holiday, Saint Evdokie's day), and it is celebrated only by persons who work with magic and Witchcraft.

Mainly in the territory of south Serbia, Witches worship the God Dabog-"Man in Black". Serbs call this God Dabog, which means that he's a God that unselfishly gives material wealth, health and fertility. Today he is identified with the Devil. A famous ethnologist, Cajkanovic, explains how this God during the Middle Ages was identified with the Devil, by the development of dualistic heretics, the Bogumils, in the Balkans. Then he was called the Tsar on the land opposed to the Tsar in heaven. He was treated as the master of all material, while the tsar in heaven is the master of all the non-material universe. That is where his development ended.

Before the Second World War, Cajkanovic published the book about the main Serbian God, where he proved that old Serbia before the Christian religion was manistic(ancestors are cult objects) and that Serbia's main God was actually the divinity of the Underworld. Based on stories, myths, beliefs, customs and rituals, he concluded that He was first represented zoo- morphically as a wolf, and then as a man with a hat and cape, both black. That he was the first vampire, werewolf, first ancestor, Lord of the Underworld, magic, demons, demons of vegetation and fertility. However, he was not right. He was not the main deity of the Serbs, but the God of certain Witches. He connected Him with Hermes, Odin, Saturn and Veles, who appears as a black horned snake, who dies and arises.

It actually is the southern Slavic horned Veles who was in Serbian Christianity identified with the Devil. He is the real lunar deity from shamanistic timeL, protector of magic, secret knowledge, lord of the Dead and other super natural creatures. He rules blacksmithing and he invented it, according to the myth. Today, people believe that blacksmithing was invented by the Devil.

He wears a black cape that reaches the ground. According to ethnologists, that cape was sometimes a rope in which the dead were rolled. He is considered to be lame like Saturn. He wears a crunch, and a pumpkin on his belt. Some Witches say that he wears a hat so his horns wouldn't show. His symbols are the cauldron and the chain that the cauldron is hanging on. Also an axe and magic shoes. His animals are the wolf and the snake. The Witches would add white rabbit, black bull and a he goat. His solar tree is oak and lunar walnut. Witches mostly worship his black face that deals with ancestors, spirits, magic and the blacksmithing trade. Solar is more the subject of one part of the old folk religion, that wasn't based only on the cult of ancestors, like Caikanovic thought. Among the blacksmithing trade, he is the protector of Watermills, goldmines and is believed to have made the first scythe.

His lunar holiday is Christmas and solar Saint John's day . On Saint John's day, before the dawn, Witches ritually pick field broom that will be used for magical purposes. Because of this, Saint John is called broom man. Today we can find him "hidden" in Christianity as the Devil, angel Michael, angel Gabriel, Saint John, Saint Sava, Saint Mrata etc. or in local beliefs as Great Spirit of Water, Great Spirit who lives in some tree, cave, mountain etc.

Beside these "large" traditions, we can find others as well, which are characteristic for some specific small regions of the country. In general, Balkan Witches work with supernatural creatures, supreme forces, spirits of nature, faeries, genius loci, animal spirits etc. Witches also work with the spirits of the dead, some angels, Saints and the Devil. Some Serbian Witches call upon the Devil when some one is in danger because, as they believe, only the Devil can stop evil, death, or illness, because he is a master of evil and all that is bad in this material world. He knows magic and can help his "people" or somebody else if they asked him to. Many of them consider that this is very dangerous, and do it only if they must.

In the Balkans, there is no "White" or "Black" magic. Some Witches are good and some of them are bad. In both cases, they work with the same forces and use the same system. Superior forces do not have feelings, and they do what their Witches ask of them. However, a very small number of Witches do bad things, because all of them believe in some form of reciprocity. They think that if they do something bad, an awful thing will happen to members of their family. A very small number of them believe that they personally would be punished after their death. But they do not believe in hell.

Balkan Witches became Witches through some form of initiation. They all are solitary and members of a non-organised cult. Balkan Witches are very strict about initiation, and they do not think that everybody can become a Witch. However, in most cases they do not respect the form of initiation where one person initiates another person. For them, that is just an empty ceremony. You must have superior forces above you. They must choose you. Because of that, Serbian anthropologists coined the term "chosen by superior forces". Superior forces chose when and how someone would be initiated. That can be at the moment of birth (born in placenta, with a little tail, a patch of wolf hair, a mole in some recognized form of Witch symbol, during the dark Moon...) or at some point during their life. Somebody can become Witch accidentally. A person can fall asleep in

some sacred place (forest, waterfalls, watermill, etc) and during sleep, superior forces can contact him. Somebody could invoke superior forces to initiate him, or try to contact some departed Witch to guide him. However, in most cases, everything is within the family. Grandmother or grandfather passes their knowledge to their sons, daughters, grandsons, or grand-daughters. It's considered that they already have "witch blood" and that they will establish full contact with the forces very easy. Classic initiation looks like this;

The first step would be that the person who wants to become a Witch should start learning the rituals and working with a Witch from their family. After that, superior forces would contact them in their dreams, or they would fall into some kind of trance, during the day, for no reason at all. Initiation is very simple. Superior forces give them something to eat, or they would touch them, give them a snake who would bite them, or something similar. That is all.

However, the next day they would have some demonstrable powers, or nobody would consider them a Witch. This does not mean that they must levitate or turn people into frogs, but they must receive some sort of "gifts" from the superior forces. This can be divination, knowledge about plants, healing, inductive hypnosis or something similar. Every Witch must have some talent that the superior forces assigned to them. After that, the chosen one must be formally accepted in fellowship.

This is done at some form of Sabbat. They do not happen in this world. In Balkan Witchcraft, it is something like a big feast with the superior forces. A person goes to the Sabbat during a dream or trance. After that, the others consider them to be a Witch. Then the superior forces would contact them regularly and they would reveal some secrets, new rituals etc. Beside this, superior forces can contact the person without any apparent reason. However, as we have observed, these people had Witches in their family a long time ago and they did not know that.

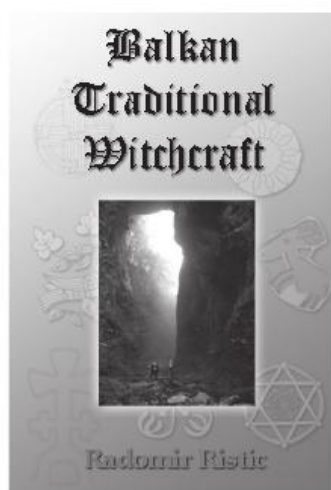
Some Witches in Serbia use something like a "book of shadows" but they are not the same. They are copy-books from old Medieval volumes, the so-called "Starostavne", which means books that were written a long time ago. The monks wrote them in Medieval monasteries. These books are very heretical and they have magic rituals, divination rituals, magic spells, knowledge about plants, astrology, odd prayers, etc...

Very often, Witches perform their rituals in their homes, in churches, in the churchyard, a graveyard, in abandoned churches, by sacred waters, in the forest, by rocks and other sacred places. There are no covens. Everyone is a solitary Witch, but on some occasions, they gather to work together - especially when they work with the ancestor spirits.

Every Witch in the Balkans follows certain rules when they perform their rituals. According to anthropologists, these rules come from shamanism. If they are important rituals, through which the Witches want to interact with superior forces, they perform their rites after midnight, they use ritual nudity, ritual silence, perform magic gestures only with their left hand, and go out of the place where ritual was performed with no turning back etc. The

most used Witches tools are kustura (magic knife-athame), broom, wand, axe, mirror, bells, ropes, the copper pans, cauldrons, animal skulls, animal horns, plants...

Radomir Ristic is the author of the book Balkan Traditional Witchcraft. This book is published in English for the first time by Pendraig Publishing. It is a compilation of historical data, anthropological writings about Witches in the Balkans, and the author's discoveries and interviews with them. It has theoretical and practical parts and gives a complete system of Balkan Craft. The system is divided into smaller elements and any element is theoretically described with practical examples.



The Subtle Sciences of Sympathetic Magic By R.J. Thompson

Spellcraft is often thought, by the outsider, to be the whole essence of the witch's practice. Indeed, many new seekers of the occult are simply looking for spells that they might cast. The very word "spell" often conjures up images of the witch standing before a grand cauldron, chanting words of power whilst casting various objects into the great iron pot. While being far from the truth, spells do have their place in the magician or witch's armory. This commonly understood (or misunderstood) practice is merely an after effect of magical practice, and is a far cry from the main objective of any serious student of the occult. Rather, the development and evolution of the self and communion with layers of existence beyond the material plane is the core of the witch's practice. Spellwork is merely the means to an end, not a part of the "Great Work" of the witch or magician. Spells are only a pleasant side effect. Sympathetic magic is far too often linked only with folk magic and spellcraft by the scholars who comment on such things. Equally as often, sympathetic magic is not fully understood by its practitioners. Indeed I have met many in the neo pagan community who had no idea what was meant when I used the term, though they themselves had been practicing the very thing. It bears mentioning, here, that sympathetic magic crosses the boundary between both the meager arts known as spells and "higher" occult arts as well

and is used as a means of reaching the deep mind of the practitioner in both practices. This work, I hope, will provide a clear and concise analysis of what sympathetic magic is, but to do this we must first come to an understanding of what magic is.

Magical Theory

Magic can be a hard thing to define. Many have attempted to do this, and have come very close to a solid definition. I think, however, that all miss the entire truth of the theory, at least by a fraction. In truth, nothing should be called magic, save for the actual arts of the Magi, priests, of ancient Persia. We, however, have come a long way from ancient Persia, and the word has changed to mean something else over the aeons. So it is that we must come up with a definition that works in the here and now. Here are two definitions given by classic occultists:

“Magic is the art and science of causing changes to occur in conformity with will”
-Aleister Crowley

“Magic is the science of the control of the secret forces of nature.” - S.L. MacGregor Mathers

These classic definitions of magic hold a great deal of truth within them, but this is not all that magic is. Nor is magic always an attempt to “control” the forces of nature, or even the spirit world for that matter. Often magic works in harmony with these things, rather than controlling them. What then is magic, if it is no longer the arcane practice of the Persian Magi, or the control of the forces of nature to do our will? I would say that magic is simply this; the ability to use occult power to control the evolution of our lives on a physical, mental and spiritual level. Now that we know this, we must come to understand how such power can be gained. One must understand that the word occult simply means “hidden.” This of course means that not all of the acquired “power” of the witch or magician is necessarily of a spiritual origin (deeper philosophies of Fate as a spiritual power and the origin of all things must be put aside to accept this statement.) Some of the “power” gained through the Mysteries and other occult practices is simply the psychological power of symbolism. Indeed, even mathematics can be seen as a sacred part of the mysteries, and thus a form of “magic.” Using ritual actions, words and materials of a symbolic (bear in mind that the symbolism must be understood) nature one can reach the inner, deep or subconscious mind, that which is closest to the secrets of the universe. Here, we now see the hidden key of all magic, sympathy.

The Theory of Sympathetic Magic

In the previous explanation we have only begun to uncover the truth about the art known as sympathetic magic. How is it that these sympathies work? Too often I have seen the explanation that natural “energies” within objects such as stones or herbs are used within magic. I argue that while these items may have “power” (as opposed to the popular terminology of the day, “energy”) which cannot be argued by any animistic magician or

witch, this is not necessarily the key to magic. Indeed, often the reasoning for the sympathies of naturally occurring objects and creatures can readily be seen in their physical makeup. In fact it is sometimes the philosophical attributes of a thing which lend to its "power." This meaning that an herb that has been classified as being "hot" would thereby be used to treat an illness classified as "cold." Rather the symbolic meanings of the object, symbol, gesture or wording within the spell are the important components when dealing with magic. These symbolic meanings may very well come from latent powers hidden within a stone, plant, color, etc. or its philosophical classification, but it is far more important that the practitioner be able to make the symbolic connection in the deep mind.

In performing a spell or ritual using this method one is accessing what has been called the "Law of Sympathy" or sympathetic magic, being the idea that like attracts, or affects, like. This idea would seem to have been around for as long as mankind has walked the earth. In our ancient past a tribe's shaman or priest may have dressed in the guise of the animal commonly hunted by the tribe for food. Hunters would then "attack" and "kill" the guiser who would then fall to the ground in a mock "death." This would be a petition to the powers that be, as if to say "This is what we want, this is what we need to survive." If the rite worked, the following hunt would be successful. This is the Law of Sympathy in the raw. Two laws govern this single law, they are the "Law of Similarity" or homeopathic magic and the "Law of Contact" or contagious magic. Here we shall further explore these laws.

Sympathetic Magic (Law of Sympathy)

Homeopathic Magic
(Law of Similarity)

Contagious Magic
(Law of Contact)

The first law that governs the Law of Sympathy is homeopathic magic or the Law of Similarity. For reasons that will become clear to the reader, this law might also be called imitative magic. This form of magic is perhaps the most widely known form of magic in the western world. This is the form of magic that uninitiated individuals are often aware of. The basic theory behind this law is the idea that like attracts like. One variation of this law in practice may be seen in this faux historical example. A farmer in the ancient north is losing a great portion of his crop due to a drought. The farmer decides that something must be done to draw the attention of Thunor in order to bring rain to his fields. One morning he gets up and slaughters a ram in the name of Thunor. He then proceeds to shear the ram and takes the fleece to the highest hill in his region, along with a jug of water. Upon the top of the hill he calls out to the rainmaker and dips the wool, looking very much like a cloud, into the water. The farmer then proceeds to wring all of the water out onto the soil and repeats the process. In this way he hopes to bring rain to his crop. The homeopathic side of this magic exists both in the focal point of the spell and the location of the rite. In using the wool and water to represent rain the farmer hopes

to clearly present his wish to Thunor. His chosen location is sympathetic to Thunor, as well as the rain, which comes from the sky. The idea here being the closer to the sky, and thus Thunor, that the rite is performed, the greater the chance of being noticed. A modern example to perform the same spell might also incorporate going atop the hill during the hour of Jupiter on Thursday, both associated with Thunor and weather working. Herbs or other plants sacred to the god, or thought to influence the weather might be scattered about the site or burnt in a fire. A second example of homeopathic magic is found in a spell meant to heal a person with jaundice. While a priest chanted sympathetic charms over the patient he was made to sip water with the hair of a red bull in it while wearing the skin of said bull. It must be made clear that red would be considered the color of health while the yellow skin tone associated with jaundice would be the color of illness. A yellow porridge would then be placed on the patient while yellow birds or other animals of that hue might be brought into the room. The porridge would then be washed from the patient, with the intention that it would take the jaundice and transfer it to the birds, who were naturally yellow. As insurance, several of the red bull hairs would then be attached to the patient. Another classic example of homeopathic magic is the naming of objects or images to cause an affect upon a desired target. This may include the self, and need not always be malevolent in nature, as some of you might be thinking at this moment. One example of this might be used to drive to friends to fight. This might be done by heating to similar stones on a fire then casting them into freezing water. After this the two stones are struck together while saying something like "These are not stones striking together, but so-and-so." This form of spell can be much aided by the second law of sympathetic magic, which we will here discuss.

The second law which governs sympathetic magic is the Law of Contact or contagious magic. This form of magic stems from the idea that objects that were once in contact with each other continue to hold sway over one another long after parting ways. This means that by affecting one object, the practitioner similarly affects the other. The popular notion of utilizing hair or nails from a victim/patient when casting a spell upon them reflects this variety of magic. There are also beliefs which state that the fate of a person is tied to the fate of their umbilical cord. Often in these beliefs the soul or spirit guardian of the person is thought to reside in the life giving cord. The cord is guarded and kept safe for this reason. Forbid that it ever be burnt, lest the person be burnt as well. Forbid it be dropped into water, lest the person drown. Likewise, it could be used by the parents of the child early on to influence the outcome of the child's life. One classic contagious magic spell would incorporate the use of a wax image of a victim or patient. By molding nails, hair or better yet blood into the image it becomes a far closer representation and, in theory, would produce a stronger affect than using an image that appears to be the victim/patient. Once the image is complete any working decided to be performed upon the person may be done. Here to lies the reason that some magicians and traditional witches use their own blood when performing magical rites. Nails and hair most certainly hold a connection with the patient, but blood is the very life force of the individual, and so all the better to use in the ritual. On a lighter note, objects once possessed by a person can likewise be used to affect them. All the better if they were beloved or prized possessions. So it now becomes simple to see how the Law of Contact works.

Conclusions

It can be seen by any that the use of sympathetic magic in the hands of the knowing sorcerer can be used to countless ends. For any who understand how these laws work, great things can await, Fate willing. Indeed sympathetic magic lies at the heart of many mystery cults, and this does not exclude the monotheistic faiths, most especially noting Christianity. At the heart of many of these faiths lies a rite, that outside of symbolic religious ritual, might seem perverse. This of course is the cannibalism of one's god. This eating the body and drinking the blood of a god, of course is symbolic. Many today see it strictly through the scope of the agrarian mysteries of the sacral god. To the initiate of the mystery religions, however, this idea takes on a new scope. For myself, the sharing of the body and blood of the sacral god can be used in rites of "immortality," but this is not the key subject here. My point being that such sympathetic magics can be used to greater ends than simple spell weaving. Similarly, the sharing of the body and blood of or with an entity can help to bring one closer with it. I utilize such rites when attempting to work with my Fetch or when petitioning new familiars. The point, again, is that the Law of Sympathy can be used to achieve great ends for the witch or magician. Indeed the greatest transcendence and enlightenment can be achieved through sympathetic magic, if the practitioner is knowledgeable and well practiced. And that, as they say, is that.

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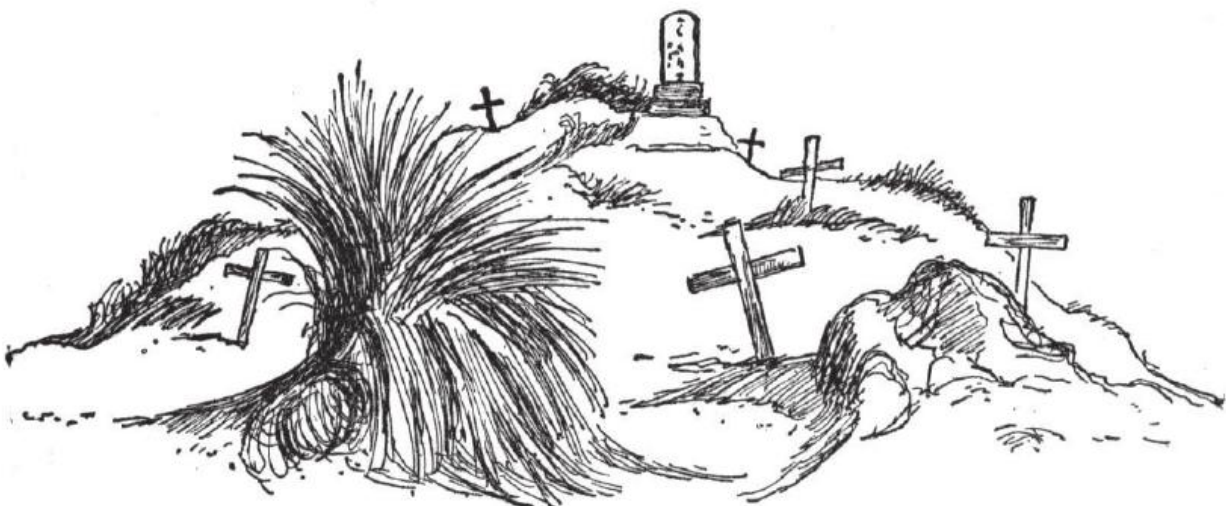
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The Call

by Veronica Cummer

Witches are made up of companies. When they convene, they form what is now called a coveen or coven. Otherwise, they were more solitary. These coveens were called for a purpose, and so all witches need a purpose. To be a witch you must do and you cannot do without a purpose. The focus of each witch is to alter what is fated, and when great change is called for, when it is needed, then many witches must convene in order to raise the magick from their bodies and focus that power upon the necessary change. They call upon the Goddess of Fate, She who always hears and always knows. They must believe in what they wish to change, they must desire it with their whole bodies and minds and, most of all, in their hearts. Otherwise, Fate shall not listen and certainly shall not care.

The heat of the fire within them is what warms Her and when the great fire is raised up from many then She is drawn to it, to them, and is more amenable to their wishes. Not that any can make sure of what Fate shall do, so all that even witches may do is persuade, not command. For this reason, it is a good idea to make an ally of Fate, to woo Her, to forge an alliance with Her. Fate is not fickle, but even Fate may be persuaded by love.

There were signs, signs that were marks of each of the companies. These signs were not secret, but the manner of the calling was secret. To hold that sign was to indicate your allegiance to the company that you belonged to, that you had been sworn to. Each calling for each company, each coveen, were different and yet at the same time, they were the same. The passwords and sigils were just symbols of the real calling, of the inner calling. A calling which could not be falsified or denied once you had been sworn to it. When you become one of the company you were given a mark, the sign of the company and you were thereafter called. Each mark of each company symbolized the outward aspect of the calling.

All witches would teach the one to replace them and pass to them the manner of calling. They did not give to that person the mark, however—that remained for the company to give. It is the God's mark to bestow, the God of the company. The master of the company was the one you would call magus or magister today, the shrouded one, the man in black. As the lady of the company wore white, for her favors mimicked those of the moon and she was the perfection all should aspire to. Blood was always part of the marking process, blood and love. The mark wasn't always a visible one, at least for those who had not gained the proper sight.

Some witches were first called without having been given the sign or being sworn and that was a sign of favor. They were called by the God of the company, called through the blood and through the spirit, and then they were inducted into the company. Not the other way around, where the mark was a sign that you would be called in the future. These witches were especially necessary for they were called directly and to service and out of a need.

Not all witches were obvious, for some remained hidden until called and then returned to being hidden again. They did not serve the community except in that manner. They were not those the people went to for herbs and simples, but were made for greater conjurations. No one knew their names. No one should know their names. They were always masked, if not literally, at least then in the cloak of the Shadow, the protector of the rites, the nameless and faceless one, the Hooded Lord that all men fear.

In the past, the witches knew a time would come when it would be a danger to be free, and so hid away within the company of men. Each to their own, they yet convened together at the great times, the times of change, but vanished away thereafter. Eventually, even attendance in the flesh became too great a danger and so they but traveled in spirit to do the work. Some gave children to the craft and some to men. But even they passed down what they knew and with it the tokens of admission.

For need remained and some few yet acknowledged them and called upon them to serve. For to ask in need and in the proper time and place is to summon one of the brethren, a spell of old that has not yet worn away. Though it has grown thin enough that some brethren but serve themselves, which is always the error of children. They have forgotten the ways and no longer walk the path both seen and unseen.

For the craft also grows old and wise and then young and foolish again, just as any other. It dies, only to be reborn from its own ashes. Now is the time of youth and foolish pride, but in time maturity will come and so reason and understanding of all that is not known, until old age returns and with it wisdom and quietude and contemplation of what will never be known. For the greatest gift of age is acceptance. Not despair, but peace.

It was once enough purpose to ensure that more witches would be made and the craft survive...but that time is no longer. The companies must today begin to convene for purpose again, to serve and to guard the lands entrusted to them. For if you do not love the land, if you do not surrender your blood to it, the land shall not love you nor give of its blood. If you do not serve the land, the land will not serve you and all shall die.

Much has been given freely in the last thousand or more years and much has been taken. Greed has ruled and men have grown proud and blind to anything else but what their own hands have wrought. Those times are ending. The circle must continue and, to do so, mankind must begin to recognize that they are not immune from payment in kind. The bees shall no longer give freely of their services. The land will begin to wither and die without the blood gift, without the understanding that we are a part of it as it is a part of us. The witches of old knew these things and those witches are returning as they must.

Fate has so decided and what Fate decides is. We then who return, who are once more called to service, we both know and do not know each other. We recognize each other by our tokens, by our pledge, and by our pride. There is within the eyes of another of our kind all we need to recognize like. This also is part of the true sight.

Witches today think too much of themselves, and yet not enough. They fear and yet dare too much at the same time. The brotherhood must lead the way and yet be not seen to lead. This is the way. Mystery cannot be taught nor shown—only the tokens of mystery. The same as the marks are not the call but the emblem of the call. So a witch must neither teach nor show, but let mystery shine within them. Wherein all shall be taught and shown. Not by the blade, but by the crown, the crown which comes from the flower, from the flowering within.

The field of blood shows the way. It is where the seeds of light are planted, the lovely seeds of the Gods, the seeds of the stars. The field must be blooded, the seeds planted, the crop sown, or there shall be no harvest. The first harvest belongs to the Gods. The first harvest bears the way for those that shall come after. This same harvest comes for the dark times ahead, when the skin of the world shall be torn away, before the new lands can be seen. When kings shall walk the hills once more and light the way for the rest of the people they are charged to protect.

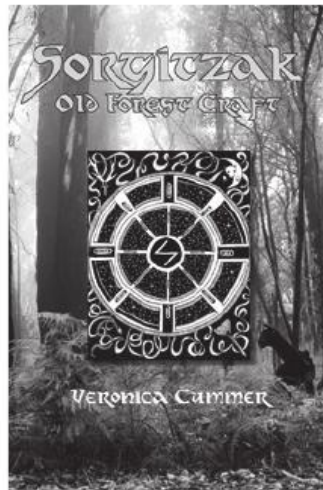
The call goes out by blood and it resounds within the blood. The blood carries the will of the witch, of what is needed. It carries the fate of all. Now it is that the world itself grows thin, thin enough that the skin of it may be ripped away at the last and the new face emerge from the depths below. Witches are called upon the aid in the shaping of that face, in the naming of it. Witches are called upon to seduce Fate, to win Her over with their fire, so that Fate shall not summon a demon rather than an angel to the door. Or, rather, what men most fear rather than what they most desire. Fate may be beautiful or terrible; it is up to the one who sees to decide which face shall be the one turned towards them. The mask within the mirror.

A Pledge

I call upon the wise ones.
I call upon the stewards of the earth
By fire and air I call thee
To be numbered among thy company
To do the good work
Know my name
Know my heart
For I am free and unafraid
And so promise myself freely
And without fear to what may come
I ask to remember
To know and to be known
As all must remember and know
To be one of the mighty
To be one of the company
I am well come, well met,
And I ask to be shown the way

To walk the path of the shining ones
To walk among the wise
A child of the earth
And of the starry heavens
A child of the Gods.

*Veronica Cummer is the author of **Sorgitzak: Old Forest Craft**. Published by Pendraig, this is a book about the religion once practiced ages ago in the Old Forest region of Europe. The book contains channeled messages from the Gods of the Old Forest and from the fey, as well as stories, myths, legends, and bits and pieces of the old witch language. It is not meant to be a "Wicca 101" book, but the next stage towards witches, in particular those of European descent, being able to reclaim their heritage. In this regard, there is no other book currently out there quite like this one. Not only does it provide a link to the past, but it also gives witches a potential focus for the future.*



The dragon and the dragonslayer

by Robin Artisson

Nearly everyone knows about the historical motif of the Dragonslayer. Most have seen the many varieties of image depicting some Christian figure- such as the Archangel Michael slaying a dragon, or (more popularly) St. George.



These images crop up with alarming regularity in the Christian world, and like all symbolic images, they represent many things to many people. To Christians, and most exoterically, they represent the triumph of light over darkness, of God's servants over the Devil, represented by the Dragon. The Devil is often associated with serpents and dragons in Christian iconography- in the Book of Revelations, he is called "That old serpent" and he appears as the apocalyptic "seven headed dragon", and furthermore, he is called "Father of Lies", "who forever deceiveth the world".

These medieval and modern images we have are the last in a long line of archetypal images of the triumph of figures of light and order over darkness and chaos. In Pagan myths, Odhinn and his brothers defeat the forces of darkness embodied by the Giants, and from the body of the king of Giants, they create the world; safe order is created from the chaotic “titanic” or gigantic elements of old. Thor, the son of Odhinn, is depicted as the “monster-slaying” God of the thundering sky, and his traditional “chief enemy” is the Midgard Serpent- the massive dragon-serpent that surrounds the world, and whom Thor eventually dies fighting at the end of the age. In Vedic lore, Indra, the chief masculine sky God who wields the thunder-weapon also defeats a massive serpent-monster, to free the waters needed by the world.

Tiamat, the great serpent-dragon Goddess who was the original holder of the “Tablets of Fate” in Babylonian Myth is slain by Marduk- a Babylonian hero-God of light, and her body is used to create the heavens and the earth.

These sorts of mythical motifs are worldwide; several Native American myths recount the slaying of giant monsters, even serpent-like monsters, whose remains become the earth itself, or are to be found embedded in the earth. In Siouan myths, for instance, the “Unktehi” monsters are destroyed (interestingly) by the Thunder-powers, the Wakinyan, who appear in their more well-known form as the “Thunder birds”. The massive skeletal remains of the Unktehi- who were “water monsters”- are believed to make up the Black Hills and the Badlands of North America.

Now, I’d like to take a second look at these motifs and the mythical impulses behind them. The clear idea emerges of order overcoming chaos; the “Ordo Ab Chao” concept which informs many other strains of social and occult thinking in our world, in surprising ways. But there is more to these myths and the image of the dragonslayer than just the nobility of order being forced onto dangerous, primordial chaos.

Perhaps originally, among Pre-Christian people, the idea of the heavenly forces of light and thunder overcoming the dangerous powers of chaos was a positive notion- but what most of the myths imply (and some outright state) is that the “dark forces” that are defeated are not banished or obliterated; they persist in a new form, a sublimated or controlled form from which goodness for sentient life can flow.

The Fomorians of ancient Ireland are defeated by the Gods, but not destroyed, for the Fomorians control the fertility of the ground and earth, and their continued existence is necessary for the good of the world. The Gods of the Teutonic peoples also did not exterminate the giants; giant maidens were often courted and married by the Gods, to produce heroes and other Gods- Thor the Giant-slayer himself was the son of Odhinn the God and the giantess who happened to be the Earth.

It is clear that these previously-defeated and banished forces are still valuable; the giants were seen as dangerous, but some were also wise and powerful in their own special manner, and were in control of fertility in the earth. The Unktehi monsters were still magically

potent, and their bones- stones and mountains- were likewise full of power.

There is a clear message here that Pagan peoples worldwide understood; the conflict between “light and dark” is not a contest of genocide for one side or the other; it is an eternal “hostile negotiation” and contest between two sides, neither of whom can maintain the dominant position or upper-hand permanently. For the good of things, both sides must have their powers expressed. This balance is needed, and even these ancient enemies need one another. It is their struggle, not their victories, that supplies the needful conditions for the world. The best poetic explanation I have heard for this is the simple comparison of summer and winter- an eternal summer would burn the world up, while an eternal winter would freeze it to death. Their alternation allows for life’s growth and flourishing, and for needful removal of outworn lifeforms.

These understandings of the necessity of opposition have no equivalent in Christianity or Islam- in these religions, a “God” reigns supreme, and his “opposition” has no real power against him- the devil only works and is allowed to exist because of God’s supposed commitment to the rather flimsy philosophical notion of “free will”. But the clear message is simple: evil exists now, but at the end of time, all evil will be destroyed utterly; it will be quite literally erased from existence, or destroyed in such a manner that never again will it emerge. There is no cosmological necessity that God and the Devil struggle; there is only a cosmological fall from a “Good” perfection and a renegade evil that will be vanquished for once and for all.

In light of these rather absurd and short-sighted notions, the Christian iconography of St. George slaying the dragon or Michael slaying the dragon take on a rather ominous new meaning- a meaning of one-sided imbalance. But these icons have another, even more pernicious layer of meaning: they represent the conquest of Pagan religions and earth-based spiritualities by the “heaven centered” Monotheisms. Furthermore, they represent the conquest of the heavenly masculine over and against the earthy feminine.

The serpent and the dragon are constant symbols of wisdom and power in all Pagan societies, from every continent. They are feminine symbols, largely, though at times the serpent can take on a masculine function as a giver of knowledge or gnosis, or an instructing figure. A literal mile-long list could be compiled, beginning with the titanic figure of Tiamat, and moving through Ireland with Brigid’s association with the “serpent from the mound” - the earth and the serpent-power are always pledged and united powers, for few animals dwell as close to the earth as the serpent, who forever lies upon it, crawling on its belly across it. In Jungian psychology, the serpent reprises its role as a symbol of the Great Mother, but also of the sexual and erotic urges- further powers that were excoriated by Christians and Muslims.

What we have in the image of the angel or saint slaying the dragon is the symbol of the particular psychology of Christianity moving itself into a dominant position over the psychology of the earlier earth-centered faiths; a symbolic triumph of “reason” over “irrationality” and “civilization” over “savagery”. In the image itself is the image of the

virile, spear-wielding male plunging his spear into the wounded and submissive dragon, an image that one need not think too hard on when one considers the relationships between men and women in the monotheistic world.

This image is the very archetypal image of our modern abuse of nature. We have placed ourselves as nature's lords and masters, just as the Book of Genesis gave the early Christian movement permission to do. Far from an equal relationship with nature, from from an equilibrated relationship, we have a relationship of "power over", and the world bleeds in many ways because of it. The dragon and the dragonslayer are not meant to be iconographically frozen with the dragonslayer forever "on top"- they are meant to trade places in their struggle, and find an equilibrium of what they represent.

Instinct must inform intellect, and vice versa- for intellect to place itself "on top", with its boot on the neck of defeated instinct (a perfect image of the socialized psychic arrangement of the average westerner) is to condemn the human being to a life of "halfness", of being cut away from the resources and vital powers of the darker side of their own nature, and from the flexibility and wholeness it provides.

The very same thing can be said of the harmful and contrived "vertical relationship" that we see today between male and female, heaven and earth, conscious and subconscious, and so forth. We must occasionally acquiesce to our wildness, if we wish to keep our civilized selves healthy and strong. We must see into the darkness of the subconscious if we are to make sense of the many conscious forms that we entertain daily.

The wound in the world and in the psyche stems from the loss of wisdom- the wisdom that wholeness is a matter of dynamic struggle, and the contents of the mind are all vitally important, even the parts that we consider uncomfortable or wild. Wisdom is not about destroying what is considered "savage" or "dangerous"; it is not about banishing the darkness under the swords of beings of light- wholeness cannot be found that way.

Carl Jung once famously said "One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious." Consider for a moment the great alchemical power of this statement- the merging of the functions of conscious perception and the unconscious matrix from which it arises leads to enlightenment, the acceptance of the whole. Nothing else will suffice.

Wholeness is found in negotiation, exploration, insight, acceptance, union, transformation, and sublimation. Wholeness is found in balanced struggle guided by wisdom. No part of the human mind or of nature itself can be excluded from our work as human beings; the great commonwealth of powers within or without are one community; none can be excluded if we wish to find our way to peace inside the self or peace in the world.

The icon of the Dragonslayer needs revision- an icon should be created in which the slayer and the dragon share halves of the field, with sword raised and with claw raised, locked in the equal struggle which ironically creates a dynamic wholeness. But before we can get

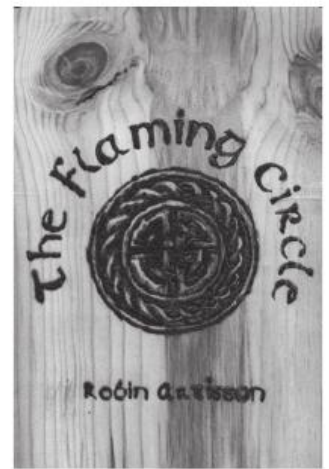
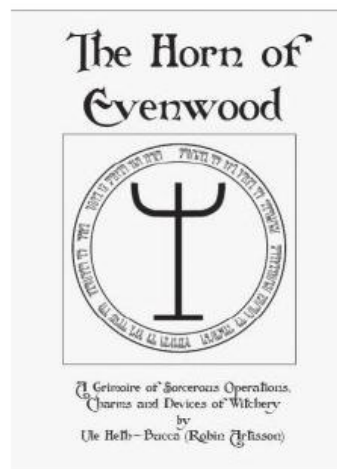
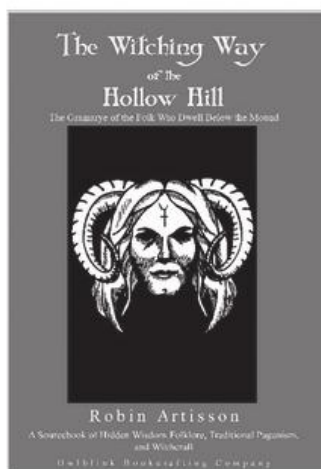
there, stronger measures are needed; the Dragon must rise up and slay the slayer, restoring it's kingdom- the earth- to the wild riot of power that was there before the impetuous and unwise slayer rushed in and upset the very fabric of reality itself by thinking he could or should destroy the "other half" of things. "In wildness" it is said "is the preservation of the world".

Once new icons appear, icons of the Dragon triumphant over the slayer- symbolizing the re-emergence of Pagan gnosis and natural spiritual awareness to the world in our present age- then the "equilibrium icon" can be crafted and in its vision of wholeness, the world can continue on into the next phase of its exploratory journey. But no matter where that journey goes, the struggle between the dragon and the dragonslayer will be part of it- our last two millennium of struggle between monotheistic "heaven mind" religions and polytheistic/animistic "earth soul" religions is only the most recent face of a cosmic drama which has no discernible beginning or end.

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Robin Artisson is the author of The Witching Way of the Hollow Hill, The Horn of Evenwood, and The Flaming Circle, which is being released very shortly by Pendraig Publishing.

"A Regeneration of the Pre-Christian Spiritual Worldviews and Religious Practices of the Holy Isles", The Flaming Circle is very different from anything Robin Artisson has written so far, for a very special reason: it is a gift for his children, full of things he would want them to know and things he would want to tell them, to help them through their lives. The book is closer, more intimate, and warmer than most of his work. But it includes massive amounts of material regarding native British Isles (Britain and Ireland) traditional Paganism and spiritual ecology, and native Gods and Goddesses. A full working reconstruction of the pre-Christian polytheistic religious perspectives and practices of Pagan Britain and Ireland is "taught" in its pages, like a guidebook and a long letter/narrative being sent from father to children.



Away With the Fairies

by M.V.Wragg

Before the morning light had intruded,
While the sky was still dark with cloud and rain
His noise disturbed a foraging thrush, a scurrying beetle, a creeping earthworm.
Headlights startled grazing rabbits, shattering the pale harmonious dawn
With flaring, reflecting, grotesque shadows hard against the shrinking trees.
Where the road was plain, dark grey granite tarmac, damp with morning,
A patched and uneven, familiar to him, old winding way.

....except that....

Where shadows lay a movement came
Defiant in the glare of his sweeping lights
And where shadows lay, a deeper shadow
A darkness blacker than the darkest night.
No fallen leaves, this, no drooping roadside herb, no
Trick of the light, no reflection from a mirrored puddle,
So he slowed as he drew closer to the place.

It must be some injured animal, he thought, slowing further
Where the misty vapours lay, milky, motionless.... except that,
Some things still shimmered there, a shifting shadow cast
Queerly in his headlights, a shape where no such shape should be.
Perhaps a stoat has got a rabbit, he thought, peering forwards
But then his lights flickered, his engine faltered, died suddenly.
He groaned, it was too early in the morning, for troubles like this

.....except that.....

And while he stared the vapours shifted
Coalesced into deniable, deranged mind things
Curly long leathern leaved, lean toed, protruding
The hint, the merest hint, of something, a face, a nose,
A bearded cheek. A blink, a squinting watery eye,
Along the thinnest edge of an ancient road
Between this world and paradise.

They are not real, not as you believed them to be
Not as your pictures showed, romanticised
Not comely, fair of face nor beautiful
Their attraction lies deeper, in curious, quivering terror
The fatal urge to look, to see, the need to believe

That something really does exist, does live, there.
Between this world and paradise.

No it is not real, it cannot be, I must be dreaming
What and why is it happening to me
Now, today? In this place? When I always come this way
Along the misty road that skirts the woods
Where foxes cry in the bracken and roe deer stand
Motionless, unafraid, their breath steaming, drifting
Between this world and paradise.

He stalled and stopped, stooped and scrabbled
At the door, in haste, in confusion, mind disarrayed
Fumbling fingers found a lifeless camera and cursed
An equally useless mobile phone He was sure he'd charged it
But nothing worked, even his reasoning slowed as they drew closer
While his pulse, his breathing and his heart rate raced wildly
Between this world and paradise.

No they are not real, not as you were given them
In story books, nursery rhymes, forgotten folk tales.
Sharp featured, quick, sly, crafty, of the forgotten places deep, these.
Murderous, secretive, possessive and resenting your intrusion
Protective, bearing torcs of electrum and moonlight soft gleaming silver,
Bearing bows with bronze arrowheads, dark as the golden earth that lay
Between this world and paradise.

No no, they cannot be real! Look at them!
How, oh how could such creatures be
Time passed and time stood still,
He blinked and licked his fear dried lips
Staring wondrously as they drew abreast,
Gaping, gasping in the glamour of their presence
Between this world and paradise.

He saw them then in their entirety
Or at least as much as they permitted him
Their faces calm with unquestioned knowledge
That no mortal man could hinder them
He saw them then, eyes wide in wonder
While they rode on scarcely heeding him
Between this world and paradise.

He counted five no, more! Possibly a dozen. Fifteen then, it might have been
With ponies drawing carts and wagons besides the ones that they did ride.

And then their Queen, their Leader, haughty, condescending as was her way with men
While he tried desperately to guess, as she gazed upon him, what they might do to him.
When she laughed, he groaned, knowing, that in that merriment lay his fate
Instinctively and resignedly, his thoughts already suggesting that his choices lay
Between this world and paradise.

She smiled at him, mockingly from the saddle, her pony's hooves shod with starlight
Courtiers, cronies, crowded round her, skittish, anxious to be on their way
Then, before the night had fled entirely, before the sun might catch and dazzle them. So
Before its light could warm the earth she tossed her head and their wheels turned again,
Straining, creaking as they hauled, a wagon, weirdly wrought with thong and sinew,
Bearing baskets of woven yarrow laden with treasure, the simplest temptation known
Between this world and paradise.

Yes she smiled at him and he realised suddenly, with an awful coldness in his heart
That the world he lived in, the world of men, was but one of a great many,
And while he knew absolutely nothing about them, he knew little enough of his own.
Knowledge is power perhaps while ignorance may be bliss for some
Until that moment he'd had no reason to consider that
Others so different as to be almost unimaginable might live
Between this world and paradise.

"Are you afraid?" She asked, dew shining on dragonfly wings.
"There is no need. We ask nothing of you. Nothing.....except that...."
He knelt and bowed his head earthwards as she spoke, his breath
Misting in the chill, otherworldly sweetened air at the roadside
"None may look upon us and remain unaltered" she told him
Then her servants and her courtiers swarmed around them, in that place
Between this world and paradise.

Their hideous features revolted him, distorted was his concept of what they should be
But in that moment, as he observed them, his fears faded,
Vanished with the growing light, their melodic, incomprehensible magical language
Blindness or madness those were his choices..... except that.....
There was a third, an alternative, more difficult, easier way.....
He took their cup and drank deeply and vanished with them through the gateway
Between this world and Paradise

© M.V.Wragg. Midsummer 2006.

The above incident took place on a road I know very well. One I have driven, ridden and walked along many times. On one side the undulating, semi cultivated heathland is dotted with irregularly shaped grassy tumuli, while on the other the billowing skirts of dense woodland,

fringed by tall flowering grasses brushes the very edges of the road which, in this story, begins at a crossroads named on the map as 'Old Bottom' before crossing, some two miles or so further on, the prehistoric track known as 'Peddars Way' Someday, it may happen to you.....

"The demon lover": An Old Craft Reading by Steven Posch

On the face of it, Child Ballad 243—known variously as “The Demon Lover,” “James Harris,” and “The House Carpenter”—is a straightforward morality play with a supernatural twist. The ballad, which exists in English, Scots, Irish, and American variants, tells the tale of an unnamed woman who leaves her husband and child to run away to sea with a sailor. There she learns, much to her dismay, that the man she had thought was her first lover is actually none other than the Devil Himself. (That “cloven foot” is a dead giveaway every time.) He breaks the ship in pieces, and the faithless woman meets a watery and well-deserved death.

The sense of a supernatural tug-of-war between good and evil is heightened in some American variants in which the deserted husband is identified as a “house carpenter,” which neatly articulates a dichotomy not only between ship/sea/faithlessness and house/land/fidelity, but between Christ and the Devil as well. Christ, of course, is traditionally portrayed in Christian mythology as a carpenter. And the Devil, as we all know, is a sailor. But of that, more later.

A closer reading of the ballad, however, suggests that what we have before us may not in fact be the cut-and-dried little warning-fable that it at first appears; but rather that Mr. Splitfoot, far from being the ballad’s villainous tempter, may actually be its hero.

The following version of the ballad is a variant current in certain American Old Craft circles, where it numbers among the “Seven Hundred [Songs]” (also known as “The Devil’s Psalter”), the legendary oral corpus of musical materials through which the Old Lore is preserved and handed down. Note how the dialogue-driven narrative and bare-bones sparseness of the text, utterly lacking in gratuitous detail, add to the song’s impact.

The Demon Lover

*"Well-met, well-met, my own true love,
and thrice well-met!" cried he.*

*"I have returned from the salt, salt sea,
and it's all for the love of thee.*

*"I might have married the king's daughter dear:
she would have married me.*

*But I have forsaken her crown of gold,
and it's all for the love of thee."*

*"Well, if you might have married the king's daughter dear,
I'm sure 'twas you to blame:*

*for I am married to a house carpenter,
and I find him a nice young man."*

*"Oh will you forsake your house carpenter,
and come along with me?*

*I'll show you where the lilies grow
by the shores of the salt, salt sea."*

*"Oh if I forsake my house carpenter
and come along with thee,
what have you got to maintain me on,
and keep me from poverty?"*

*"Six ships, six ships all out on the sea,
and seven more upon dry land;
one hundred and ten brave sailor-men
shall be at your command."*

*She's picked up her own wee babe
and gave him kisses three, saying
"Stay safe here with that house carpenter,
and keep him company."*

*They had not sailed but a league, a league,
I'm sure it was not three,
it's then that she spied his cloven foot,
and she wept most bitterly.*

*"Oh why do you weep, my own true love?
Weep you for your gold in store?"*

*Or do you weep for that house carpenter,
who never you shall see any more?"*

*"No, I do not weep for that house carpenter,
nor for any gold in store,
but I do weep for my own wee babe,
who never I shall see any more.*

*"What hills, what hills are those my love,
those hills so fair and high?"
"Those are the hills of life, my love,
but not for you and I."*

*"And what hills, what hills, are those my love,
those hills so dark and low?"
"Those are the hills of death, my love,
where you and I must go."*

*He broke the topmast with his hand,
the mainmast with his knee;
he broke that gallant ship in two,
and sunk her to the bottom of the sea.*

Notes

5 I might have married the king's daughter dear. Attempts to read this as an allusion to liaisons between the b'nei elohim and the daughters of men of Gen. 6 are surely tendentious.

20-21 Six ships all out on the sea...and seven more upon dry land. Note total.

31 his cloven foot. The traditional identifying sign of the Devil.

103 Those are the hills of life. In some recensions, the hills of Heaven.

107 Those are the hills of death. In some recensions, the hills of Hell.

Interpreters of this ballad generally read it as a simple tale of temptation-desertion-betrayal. The entire tenor of the tale shifts, though, if we view He of the Hoof not as tempter, but as psychopomp. My suggestion is that we read him, not quite as Death personified (death being neither a person nor a thing, but rather a cessation of function), but as Lord of Death. This is a not-untraditional role for the God of Witches to play, who himself as Firstborn of the Dead becomes both First of the Wise and Grand Initiator. Viewed from this perspective, his decision to wear the form of the woman's first lover becomes an act,

not so much of deception, as of mercy. How better to meet death than in the form of the one you loved first and best?

Certain commentators have suggested that the hills of life and death in the eleventh and twelfth stanzas allude to the Sabbat Mount, the sacred mountain of the witches, death being the final entry into the Eternal Sabbat. For myself, I find this reading creative, but somewhat less than compelling.

Of greater interest, to my mind, is the association between Old Clootie and the ship. The lore of the Horned One's ship extends far into European prehistory, and figures especially prominently in the petroglyphs of Bronze Age Scandinavia, among which the ship captained by the oversized man with horns and ithyphallus is a motif of great antiquity. This is the ship that sails between worlds: hence its prominence in this ballad. The God's Ship with its antlered prow figures strongly in American witch lore as the ship which brought the Gods of the Old World to the New (which, as a little thought will show, is both literally and figuratively true). This is the story alluded to in certain versions of the traditional carol, "I Saw Three Ships Come Sailing In."

And what was in those ships all three...
on New Year's Day in the morning?

The Hornéd One and his Ladee...
on New Year's Day in the morning.

A slightly different version occurs in the carol "The Sycamore Tree":

I saw three ships come sailing there,
come sailing there, come sailing there:
Old Hornie and his Lady they bear,
a Midwinter's Day in the morning.

In light of the previously-mentioned Devil/Christ dichotomy, another interesting possibility is raised by our heroine's response when asked if she is weeping for "that house carpenter, who never you shall see any more." She rejects the suggestion; her tears are for the child she left behind, not for the house-carpenter whom she had earlier damned with faint praise, characterizing him as "a nice young man."

I would suggest that we may read this ballad not only as a story of a woman's emotional life, but also of her spiritual history as well. In her youth, she gave her heart to the Old Way, but later—for pragmatic reasons, perhaps--shifted allegiance to the New (as represented by the "house carpenter," i.e. Christ). In the end, though, she returns to her first love, leaving behind (if mourning) all subsequent claims on her affection.

I find it uniquely touching that to the very end the Devil and his anonymous lover continue to refer to one another as “my love” and “my own true love.” He of the Horns has haunted our dreams from the very beginning: humanity’s first, best love.

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Described by friends as a “wicked old warlock,” poet and storyteller Steven Posch is rumored to have been raised in western Pennsylvania by white-tailed deer. He currently lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. His first compilation of original stories, Radio Paganistan: Folktales of the Urban Witches is available from www.omnium.com. His book Lost Gods of the Witches: The Repolytheization of the West is currently in preparation. Gods help us all.

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SCOURGES and TRADITIONAL CRAFT

by Radomir Ristic

In the past few years, we have had the opportunity to read many different opinions about scourges and their uses in old Craft. Many authors claimed that in traditional Craft there are no such things and that they are Gardner’s invention. Gardner was the founder of Wicca, and today we know that Wicca has almost nothing in common with Traditional Witchcraft. We have also seen some statements that the scourge was “invented” in Wicca by G.Gardner because he loved S&M. However, some others authors claim that scourges were used in Old Craft, but not in the way Gardner used them in Wicca.

We do not know what the truth is where western European Witchcraft is concerned, but we can say what the situation is in the Balkans. Scourges are used in Balkan Craft. To be clear, we must say that we never saw a Traditional Witch in the Balkans using a scourge during a ritual, but every one of them will tell you how to make one, and how use it. There is no “oath of silence” among the Balkan Witches. We might assume that they do not have scourges because it is very complicated to make one, and that they are not some “important” ritual tool. The most classic scourge is made the following way...

It is necessary to find three hemp seeds (*cannabis sativa*), because the magical scourge must be made of its fiber. Hemp is one of most sacred plants in Serbia. In the countryside,

during springtime, a snake needs to be killed and then its head must be cut off with a silver coin. After that, the three hemp seeds must be placed in the snake's head, and it is buried in the ground. After some time, from that head a hemp tree will sprout. The hemp must be collected and processed, and finally the scourge must be woven and knotted. Later it will be used only for magical purposes.

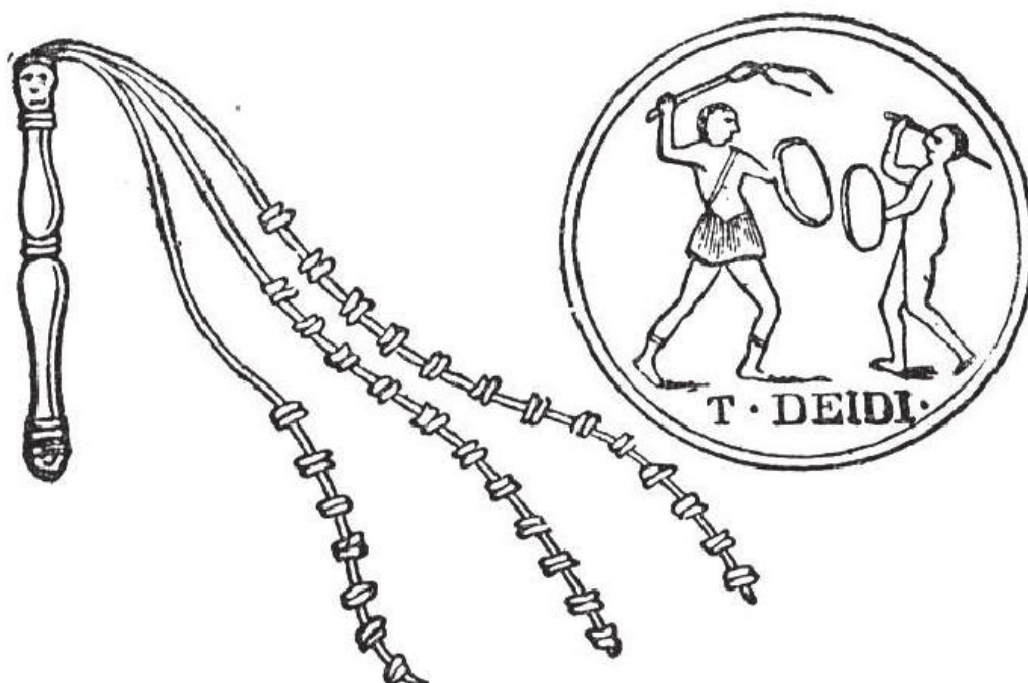
Its usage is not common in Balkan Craft, especially today, but it was used in earlier times. Its secret name, among witches, was "snake". It was a symbol of chthonic powers, as snakes are, and probably the Slavic God Veles, who is in the Underworld in the shape of a black snake. Veles was the opponent to Perun, who was the "Storm God" and bringer of clouds, storms and rain. In the shape of a black snake, Veles fought with him, banishing heavy clouds and storms. Witches scourges were used for the same thing, so we can conclude that they are a representation of him.

The important thing is that scourges were not used for scourging the people. In the Balkan Craft covens do not exist. Scourges were used for three things:

1. For scourging cattle, if you want to sell the cattle easily on the market.
2. For scourging an empty space, during the storm, to banish heavy clouds.
3. For banishing evil forces from some places (like stables, sheepfolds, watermills, houses, etc...)

In old times people were whipped, but with slim willow sticks. They used them to banish fever, illness, and evil spirits. In old times, people believed that all kind of illnesses were caused by demons of illness. Willow sticks are not in use today.

Radomir Ristic



call To The dark mother

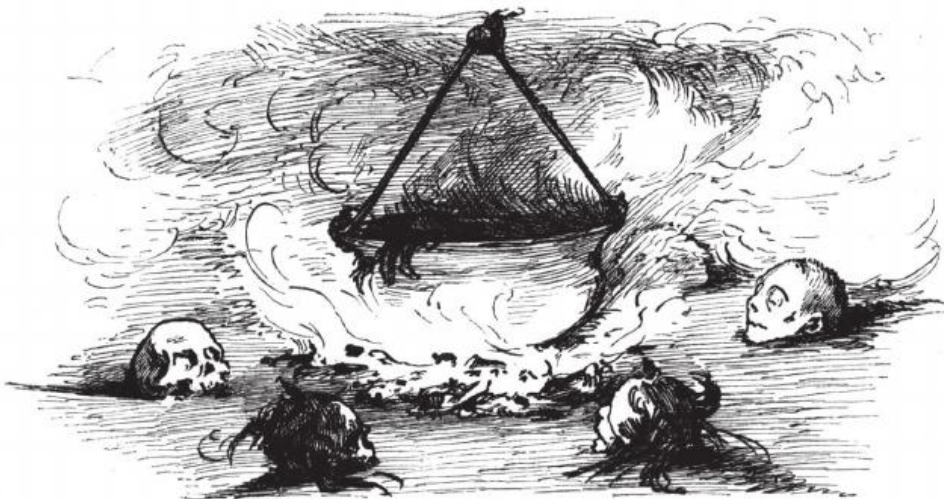
You who are the bitter gall that sweetens all in Life,
We call to you from the heart of the Rose
You are without the Compass
And yet you encompass it
And all is one with you.

Come share a feast with us
Food from above the earth
And below it -
Rich pickings to tempt the hand of Fate
And fine drink to intoxicate the spirit.

We feast this night in your honor
For you are the Shadow from which is brought forth the Light
The heel-stone to the Notheast
You overshadow all within the Circle Round
And thus all within is of you.

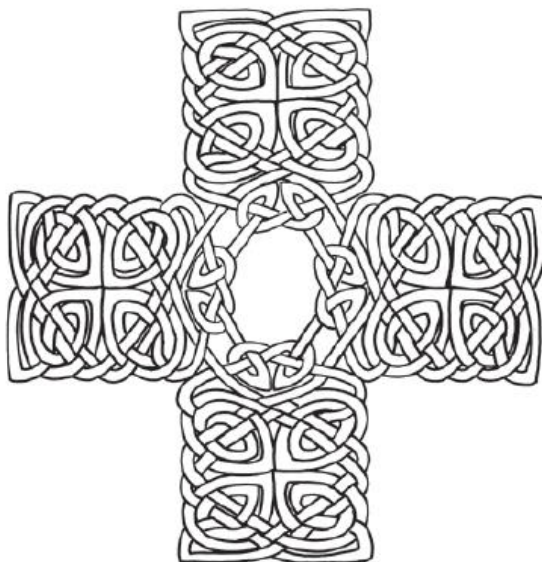
Bring your Dark Blessing to this meal we share
That all who partake of it
May share in some small portion of your essence
And thus come to know you
In their hearts
For to the mind you are
Unfathomable, incomprehensible.
Thus we who seek to know you
Must ever find you in our heart.

This is another of Peter's Nine Poems, written to honor the Black Goddess.



The Occult Significance of the Crossing Rite

By R.J. Thompson



The Sign of the Cross, the Hammer Sign, the Qabalistic Cross; enigmatic and essential rites within the mystical systems that they originate from. Often such rites are used to begin a greater rite or petition. Other times the crossing of the self has been used for protective purposes. Yet at other times the sign is used as a blessing or to seal power. While often thought of as a Christian rite, the sign of the cross goes far beyond the overly simplified version that so many are accustomed to: “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen,” so often used by these faiths to begin and end prayer. According to Catholicism the sign of the cross is a blessing and joining of sorts. The “joining” means the binding of the mystery Holy Trinity with the mystery of the Redemption. This then encompasses the entire essence of life, through to the end when a soul is joined in eternal life with Christ. The rite breaks such boundaries in it’s occult usage, as we shall observe in the following analysis.

The Qabalistic Cross

Perhaps the most common of the occult usages of the Sign of the Cross is that of the Qabalistic Cross, initially created by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. This variation of the crossing rite is often tied to the Lesser, Greater or Supreme Banishing of the Pentagram Rituals. In this variation of the crossing rite the practitioner will stand, often facing east, though it is my opinion that this direction may be altered depending upon the rite that it accompanies, if any. Facing the chosen direction the practitioner will proceed through the following steps:

1. A brilliant light is visualized above the practitioner's head. The practitioner reaches up and touches this light with the index finger or the tip of a ritual dagger. The light is then dragged down to the forehead
2. Touches the forehead and intones "Atah" (Ah-tah, meaning "thou art.") The hand is then brought down to the center of the breast
3. Touches breast, in the center but near the heart while intoning "Malkuth" (Mahl-kooth, meaning "the kingdom.") The light is visualized as descending down from the forehead to the feet. The hand is then moved to the right shoulder.
4. Touches the right shoulder and intones "ve-Geburah" (v' ge-boo-rah, meaning "the power.") A point of light is visualized at this spot. The hand is then moved across to the left shoulder
5. Touches the left shoulder and intones "ve-Gedulah" (v' ge-doo-lah meaning "the glory.") The light is seen as moving from the right shoulder to the left. It bears mentioning that ve-Gedulah is sometimes interpreted as Chesed or mercy, as opposed to glory.
6. The hands are then brought together, as if praying, on the breast and the practitioner intones "Le-Olahm, Amen" (Le-oh-lahm, ah-men meaning "forever, unto the ages.")

This technique has its roots with the Qabalistic tree of life. Indeed, each point of this cross has its origin within one of the sephirah of the tree of life. In addition each of these points is directly connected to one of the four classical elements so often invoked in Ceremonial Magick. The first point Atah or "thou art" is connected to the sephirah Kether or "I am," and also to the element of air. It also refers, in this instance, to the spirit or higher genius of man. The sphere of Malkuth or "the kingdom" is linked to the element of earth. This point is in reference to the physical body. Ve-Gedulah or "the power" is related to the element of fire. Ve-Geburah or "glory" (it is important to remember that it may also be "mercy") is related to the element of water. These two points are also in reference to the polarities of man's ego, as well as the light and dark pillars of Solomon's temple. We can begin to see all of the polarities apparent in this rite. All of these polarities become balanced when the hands are brought together upon the breast.

So, though we may see a similar method to the Christian Sign of the Cross, we begin to see a far deeper ritual. One great difference to be noted here is the reversal of which shoulder is touched first between the Christian cross and the occult crosses. This is because the goal of the occultist and witch is to make a connection with "god" thus we might look upon "god." This is contrary to the Christian view that God cannot be viewed from the front, and thus our crosses are reversed so that the occultist approaches their "god" from the front while the Christian and non-initiate approaches God from the rear, so as not to look upon the face of God. This entire philosophy goes far deeper than this involving the Tree of Life

as God's front or backside, but that could be an entire entry in itself, and I do not wish to weigh down this work on the crossing rites with such things.

This last bit of information should have given away that a great part of the crossing rites is meant to connect one with "god." More on this will be revealed soon, but first there is another aspect of this crossing rite that is shared with the Christians. This may be something that is ready to burst from the mouth of any Catholic or ex-Catholic at this very moment! You may have noticed that the spheres reflect the occasional last lines of the so-called "Lord's Prayer." "For the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory art Yours, now and forever, Amen," or in the instance of our study "Thou Art the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory (mercy?) forever until the end of time." What does all of this mean? It is a simple invocation and communion to what the magician/witch is reaching up towards in the beginning of the rite, but I shall reveal more on this later. As for now, there are other such rites to be examined.

The Hammer Sign on the Body

This is a crossing rite used in modern reconstructionist Germanic heathenry. It is a rite that is meant to be used as a daily empowerment and blessing, as I had learned it. It may also be used by the practitioner at the beginning of any ritual. The core form that I shall display here utilizes a standard theological pattern. The rite is performed thusly:

1. Envision a bright ball of light floating about two feet above the head. The hand is reached up and the light is grasped and pulled toward the forehead. Touch the forehead and say "Tiw." The hand is then brought down to the top of the sternum (or occasionally the mouth)
2. Touch the top of the sternum (mouth) and say "Woden." The light is then drawn further down the solar plexus
3. Touch the solar plexus and say "Thunor." The light is then drawn to the left shoulder
4. Touch the left shoulder and say "Frey." The light is then drawn across to the right shoulder
5. Touch the right shoulder and say "Freya."

The same pattern and, to a degree, the same desired effect can clearly be seen in these two rights. The obvious difference (outside of the use of Germanic deities in place of the spheres) being that in the Hammer Signing we have the center invoked as the second step in the process, as opposed to being the final step. The balance occurring in this rite at the crossing point in the end when Frey and Freya, "Lord" and "Lady," are invoked on the opposite shoulders. It is simple to see this brother and sister invocation as a the balancing portion of the rite. A second difference in this rite is that the power drawn from it is

meant to be drawn from the deities invoked in the process. Thirdly, it will be noted that the shoulders are touched in the opposite order in this rite. But what do the similarities in the rites mean, what is the luminous source envisioned above the practitioner and just what is the true intent of the crossing rite? These are the questions that I set about to answer and so I shall answer them, in due time. First let us observe the crossing rite of certain witches.

A Witches Crossing Rite

The crossing rites that I have come across as used by witches are a different than these others variants in that they are more simplistic in their nature. In fact the simplicity of the rites often borders that of the modern ley Christian variant that I had listed above. Indeed, I have often seen these rites, as used by witches, claiming only to offer protection, not a far cry from the Christian symbolism at all. These often go something like this:

1. Touch the brow and say: "In the name of the Lord"
2. Touch the navel and say: "And of the Lady"
3. Touch the right shoulder "The Darkness"
4. Touch the left shoulder "and Bright"
5. Says: "Wisdom and Power of Fate's Hand."

One can see basic differences in that this crossing has no internal visualizations. This might mean that there is less contact with anything outside of the internal self and that which is specifically invoked in the crossing. This would, to a degree, defeat the higher working of the crossing rite, as I shall reveal as we progress. The following sample is one that I utilize in workings of witchcraft and have incorporated into group workings as well.

1. A luminescence is envisioned floating above the practitioner's head. The practitioner reaches up, preferably with the left hand, to touch this. The hand is brought down, drawing with it the light, and touches the forehead. The practitioner says: "In the name of the Master." The light is then drawn down to the navel.
2. Touches the navel and says: "and the Dame." The pillar of light is envisioned as descending down through the body and into the ground. The light is then drawn to the left shoulder.
3. Touches the right shoulder and says: "and the Shadow." The light is drawn across to the right shoulder.
4. Touches the left shoulder and says: "and Light."

5. Says: "Holiness of the Wane and the True."

We can see that this variant is much closer to the first two that we have studied. The rite also tends to serve the same purposes as far as balancing goes. This rite is most often used at the beginning of, or in prelude to, the drawing of the compass or ring of art. All of this explanation and we are yet again left to wonder at the basic mystery of this rite. Yet before answering these questions, I would like to cover a bit on the "lower" uses of the sign of the cross to bless, protect and bind.

A Basic Miscellany of Crossing Gestures and Their Intent

Let us begin with the now familiar "Hammer Sign." The sign of the hammer is used not only in the above right, but is drawn in the air as a sign of invocation. It is also used as a blessing and protective gesture, in much the same way that a Christian might use the sign of the cross for the same reasons. This variant often has a shorter "foot" extending from the bottom of the "hammer" than that of the variation which crosses the body. The cross might be used in a similar manner by practitioners of other occult arts and does have a wide range of uses in the folk tradition.

Let us take, firstly, the old Irish example of crossing the mouth when yawning as a precaution against evil spirits from entering the mouth and taking possession of the body.

There is an old Anglo-Saxon charm from the 10th century which was intended to protect a horse from harm (especially that which was brought about by elves) and called for the physical scarring of the sign of the cross upon the body of the animal. A knife with a yellow horn handle taken from an ox, and inscribed with the words "Blessed Be all the works of the Lord of Lords." The horn is shod with three nails and knife taken before the animal in question. The sign of the cross is then inscribed (cut) into the forehead, spine and as many limbs as can be reached. The left ear is then pierced. The horse is then hit upon the back with a "wand." All ills, and especially those caused by elves, will be cured and the horse will be protected.

According to Bald's Leechbook mugwort should be picked before sunrise, accompanied by a magical incantation and blessed with the sign of the cross as it is picked. The plant is self being said to have the magical properties to drive away and protect from evil spirits.

According to the Anglo-Saxon Land Ceremonies Charm the sign of the cross can be used to hallow, protect and sustain the land that it is drawn over during the rite. I, myself, continue the practice of this charm, including the use of crossing during it. I have substituted a triple crossing in place of the single crossings originally found in the rite. The triple crossing technique is one used by modern witches and, I have found, is typically used to hallow or seal power within an object, place, etc. Now that I have shared these simple spells, I will explain the greater mystery that I have been putting off in the whole of this analysis.

The Mysteries of the Crossing Rite

Now we shall investigate into the meaning behind the crossing rites that we have studied. We know one of the mysteries already, that of the balancing act of polarized powers within the self, yet there is another balance occurring here as well. This second balance is four fold. You will remember when learning about the Qabalistic Cross that each point corresponded to one of the classical elements. Each element philosophically corresponds to one of the elements of the periodic table. They can be seen this way:

Air = Oxygen
Water = Hydrogen
Fire = Nitrogen
Earth = Carbon

Here we see the balance made on a physical level, dealing with our carbon bodies. From this we begin to understand that we are bringing about three fold balance in the self. The two-fold balance of the ego/mind/soul and the four fold elemental balance of the physical body. You may be saying to yourself, "What is the third balance?" though it may already be clear to you.

The third is the balance of spirit. This of course is not the spirit in the sense that most of the uninitiated would speak of, but rather the higher spirit that all mystics strive for communion with. I am, of course, speaking of the fetch, holy guardian angel, personal god or higher self, as it has variously been called. This is the entity whose fate is the reason that you live, though the philosophy of this is best left to a separate work. The fetch, as I shall refer to it from here on, is the guiding entity that the mystic must connect with to truly begin to understand Fate and the universe. It is through communion with this entity which all of us are governed by that we might attain inner peace and enlightenment. It is also through this communion that we might gain true inspiration from the personal Muse.

The Master of the Feri tradition of witchcraft, Victor H. Anderson put forth the idea that this entity, which he termed the "personal god" and "overself," lie in an area floating above the head. He also stated that through this entity we could get a glimpse of the "cosmic mind" (Fate to the witch.) This is the entity that watches over and guides us through life. So, now things begin to become a bit clearer! The true goal of crossing rites is the balance of mind, body and spirit. Beyond this balance there is the greater goal of communion with the fetch. Many magicians seek to find ways to hold communion with this entity, yet the truth is that they are already experiencing a brief communion with it each and every time that they perform their variant of the crossing rite.

Now that this mystery has been revealed, the reader is armed with an arsenal of crossing rites to aid in the communion with the fetch. Using the crossing rite in this way can be very effective when combined with a communal (symbolic) feast such as the sacrament of bread and wine if it is offered up directly for communion with the fetch. In this way I find the Qabalistic Cross technique to be the most effective, as the proper symbolism is already

inherent in the words that are intoned. Do not worry about other symbols in the Qabala, it is only important, for our purposes, that the practitioner understand the words being used within this rite, and understand there depth in relation to the communal variation of the rite. Once the communion has been made and a working relationship with the fetch is established one can call upon this spirit when performing the crossing rite to extend into the otherworlds and into the universe to retrieve other mysteries and to make contact with other spirit entities. In conclusion, we can see that the crossing rite, in it's many forms, is invaluable to the witch, magician and occultist. And that, as they say, is that.

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Cupmarks

by Steven Posch

*We have it from our mothers,
and they from their mothers' mothers,
that on the point above where
the Minnesota joins the Mississippi—
Fort Snelling stands there now—
there used to be a fireground where
folks would go to dance on nights
when the moon was full, red, white,
and black folks all together. Somewhere
beneath the fort, they say (the exact
location is lost) lies the big red rock
where the Bison Man would sit
to watch the dancing when he presided
at these sabbats. Someday we will
find this rock again, and when we do,
we will know it is the right one
by the pair of gently rounded cupmarks
on the top, marking the place
where his testicles used to rest.*

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The Great Spirits of Fate

by Radomir Ristic

Spirits of fate are probably the most well known supreme forces among the various nations in western civilisation. We can find them almost everywhere. In their most common shape of three young girls or old women, under different names, they exist in many cultures. In Bulgaria people know them as "Orisnice". According to the story, they are three sisters who live at the end of the world. Before they would come to the newborn children, they would ask God what kind of destiny to give them. On the third night after a child's birth they would determinate the fate of the child. In Russia, people call them "Rozdanice", in Czechoslovakia "Sudicke", in Serbia "Sudjenice" in Romania "Ursitoare", in Albania "Ore", "Fate" or "Mire". In Latvia and Lithuania they are well known as Laima.

The Antic people have their own version, known as the Moirae in Greek mythology and Parcae in Roman mythology. In Nordic mythology, they are known as Norns. Celts have "Matres" which are also represents in triple form. Some scholars see them as a representation of motherhood but that is not correct. That is only one part of their character.

None of these spirits of fate or destiny are goddesses, at least not in the literary sense. Some people, even scholars are inclined to call them that, but it is not correct. They are much more "primitive" and older than the goddesses from polytheistic pantheons. Goddesses who are protectors of weaving and spinning will take up their role after the formation of polytheistic pantheons. For instance, Frigg replaced the Nordic Norns, but among peasants, they still played a very important role. The same thing happened with Greek Moirae and their role was taken by Athena. Among the Celts the goddess Brigid, who is a spinner, became a goddess of fate as well. Slavic people got the Mokosh who are connected with all female activities such as motherhood, spinning and weaving.

Why does that happen? To understand that we must know a couple of things. The development of religion we can observe as continuing the complexity of the way humans look at life, death and nature. With humanity's progress and evolution, our ideas about unnatural, hidden forces, otherworld etc., become more and more complex. In the beginning, animism and ancestor worshiping were the primal beliefs. Animism (lat. anima-soul, spirit) is the belief in the existence of spirits separete from bodies, or the doctrine that everything is alive and possesses all the characteristic that humans do. This was a time when all kind of spirits become a common part of human life. The basic method for communication with them, on a global level, was shamanism. That time was known as a time when a basic "demonology" belief system was present. Here the word "demon" is from the old Greek (daemon) and simply means, "supernatural being". After that came a phase of "developed demonology". This was when the human race got their first gods and goddesses, but more "primitive" ones. Of course, after that, the next step was paganism (from Latin "pagus" - village") which simply meant that it was peasant religion. After developed paganism we can talk about a new phase - polytheism. That was a time when the first complex gods and

goddesses stepped into the scene with the polytheistic pantheons.

We can conclude two things from this. The first one is that spirits are much older than polytheistic gods and goddesses, and the second one is that the basic method for communication with them was shamanism. Traditional witchcraft has its roots in old shamanism, and it is one form of developed shamanism. Shamanism is not some old form of pagan religion, it is a complex mixture of various methods, with which shamans can contact the “other world”, “supernatural beings”, perform healing etc. Croatian professor of ethnology and social anthropology Vitomir Belaj said; “Shamans do not care whose gods they contact, they do not care which gods they are.” This is correct. Because of that, shamans can chose to work with spirits, ancestors, or pagan gods, but also with Christian saints, angels etc., or with all of them together. As we can see in anthropology, they usually choose to work with supernatural beings from their own culture. These beings, in most cases, are from the state religion and folk mythology. The bottom line is that they chose to work with beings that they believe really exist.

However, there is one important thing to note. Witches very often use their shamanistic methods to contact a much older form of supernatural being, older than gods and Christian saints or angels, because they are certain that they really exist, that they will help them, and that they be contacted very easily. To be clear, let’s say that they can work with pagan gods or goddesses, Saint John, for instance, or some angel; but when situation becomes serious they will always make contact with the much older form of supernatural beings. These older forms of supernatural beings are spirits. There are many kinds of spirits, some of them are great (Great Spirit of Water, of Forest, Fairy Queen etc.) some are small (faeries, spirits of trees, spirits from small places in nature etc.). Some of them are more important then others. One of the most important classes of spirit are the Spirits of Fate. The reason is simple. People believe that these spirits determine their fate. Because of this, in some traditions they can be the focus of the cult, and in the others they can play some other significant role.

In Serbia, people describe them as three beautiful girls with long hair. They believe that they come to each newborn child, during the first three days of its life. The midwife would start cleaning the house, everybody would be dressed in new clothes, including the baby. As chthonic creatures, these spirits of fate, “Sudjenice”, should arrive at midnight. The light must be on. Before they arrive, the midwife would perform a ritual. She would take three slices of bread, and cover them with honey. She would put them on the table with a clean or new tablecloth, and next to them, she would put three glasses of wine, three glasses of water, three cubes of sugar and one golden coin. That was an offering to them. Later, if the child was a boy, three men would eat the bread, and if the child was a girl, three women would eat them. On the third night, the family would put the golden coin under the child’s pillow, and a slice of cake, too. The mother of the child should be awake for the three days and if she fell asleep, she should remember what she was dreaming about, because people think that the Spirits of Fate would visit her there. If she was awake, she should listen to what the Spirit of Fate said about the child’s destiny. All three “Sudjenice” determined the child’s destiny, but people think that the third one, who speaks last, is the most powerful one. What she said would be.

Witches in Serbia contact these Spirits of Fate for other reasons. When they suspect that someone wants to kill them or some other person, and they know about it, they call them for help. But before we describe that ritual, we must give an explanation of how somebody performs a “killing” by magic. There are several well-known methods in Balkan witchcraft for “killing”. Many of them are connected with some form of necromancy. For instance, the most terrible one is using a potion made from “dead man’s water”. Some deceased person bathed in that water and because of this, this potion has that name. Chanting the proper spell, the evil witch puts that potion into food, drink or something else, and gives it to the person that they want to see dead. Another famous way of magical killing is using “The egg”. In Serbian Witchcraft, the egg is symbol of soul, life, life energy, fertility etc. It can be used like “voodoo doll”. In that case the characteristics of the person that the evil witch wants to kill must be transferred to the egg. She usually gives the egg the name of that person, and casts the spell. In most cases, she would say something like; “as this egg rots, so will your body rot.” Then the evil Witch buries the bewitched egg in the backyard of the victim or somewhere else near to them. If that person or some witch finds that egg, they will call the Spirits of Fate to help. Usually if the person is not Witch, they would take that egg and bring them to a Witch. The same night, before they went to bed, the Witch would start a ritual;

They would put the egg in a dish full of water and then put it in the oven. When the water starts to boil, they would cut the water three times with their magic knife (in Serbian - *kustura*). Once they have done that, they would chant three times, something like this:

“I don’t cook the water, I don’t cook the egg, but the evil people, evil souls, evil Witches, evil demons... all my enemies that come to my house, to my property, and want to do us harm... my enemies.”

Finally, with three fingers of the left hand, they would take three pinches salt and put it three times in the dish with the water and the egg. Then they spilled that water over the house threshold and chanted something like this:

“I cooked all my enemies, the ones that plotted against my life (or the other person’s life), that sent me evil thoughts, and wanted for me the things that are not meant to be. I spilled water in the backyard to protect us from any evil. I cleaned everything, cleaned with the help of the sacred destined ones by the great Spirits of Fate, *Sudjenice*, for the well-being of all of us. So be it.”

After that, the Witch would cross themselves, saying three times “amen”. Then they would wrap the egg in a cloth (most often cotton or wool) and bury it in some dish with soil. Then she would place the dish in front of the house. In the morning the Witch would take out the egg and start to observe it. She would look for some special marks on it. Marks on the egg should reveal who is the person who tried to hurt her or the other person. Usually they try to see some letters or initials. Finally, the Witch would take the egg to the river and throw it away, chanting the following:

“To the rocks and stones you will go... and you will end in the sand... until you melt down, to endlessly count and never finish the counting.”

After all this, the place where the egg was thrown must be abandoned quickly and without looking back. The house must be purified with some kind of incense or with sage which is the old, original Witches’ way. The Witch would light a wax candle and make bread for a sacrificial banquet, which should be organized. Sometimes they place a fresh egg in the central part of the house as a symbol of untouched life.

As we can see, Witches ask for help from the Spirits of Fate in this typical defence ritual. Actually, they do that more often, every time that somebody wants to interfere in somebody else’s destiny. That can be for life, health, wellness, love, etc. Witches look at them as the most powerful force, that is able to reverse any kind of magic that is affecting a person’s life and destiny. They do this because they are the Spirits of Fate and everybody who interferes in somebody’s life actually interfere in their job.

The Nine Noble VIRTUES and Traditional WITCHCRAFT; A BRIEF SYNOPSIS by R.J. Thompson

Many who are involved in paganism, or at the least traditional or reconstructionist paganism, today are aware of the Nine Noble Virtues held by the Asatru. The Nine Noble Virtues are meant to show us how to live a good life and be good people. These virtues are taken, indirectly from the “Havamal” and reflect important disciplines for a follower of the northern paths. While not always associated with Asatru or northern heathenry much of witchcraft has its roots in northern European paganism, and so can mesh well with these virtues. The Nine Noble Virtues are an ideal guideline for the witch to live by.

The Nine Noble Virtues, and explanations of each are as follows:

Courage: is a state of mind which compels us to perform the deeds that must be performed, act as we must act, think as we must think and do as we must do regardless of fear or danger. Courage, in essence, is born out of fear and at the same time is the force within us used to overcome fear.

Discipline: is the force and state of mind by which we motivate ourselves to perform the tasks that we must perform. It is the state of mind and force within us which allows us to achieve success. In this way it is Discipline which governs our commitments, spiritual, magical and secular.

Loyalty/Fidelity: is our commitment to serve and protect the well being of those that might be deemed worthy of such. This involves the world of our own Middle Earth, as well as the spirits and gods of the otherworlds. It is also a commitment that the witch makes to the path that they have sworn to follow, and in this way ties to the virtue of Discipline.

Honor: is a state of mind put forth by our own self esteem. It is a commitment to fulfill one's duties, respect of others (both physical and mental,) a call to keep oaths/promises and above all a call to take responsibility seriously. This ties closely to the virtue of Truth. Honor also means never compromising in the service to one's gods nor to one's responsibilities.

Hospitality: is a call to be generous and kind to those who enter into your household, or with whom you have any ongoing dealings. This means offering good will onto others and helping those in your community who approach you for such in an honorable manner. On a deeper level this means that you must be considering the Web of Wyrd at all times and knowing how your actions might affect the lives of others around you. Honor can be seen as a key to Hospitality.

Industriousness: a thing not well kept in modern pagan communities, unfortunately, is a constant striving to develop one's skills in the world. It is also the drive to work hard to provide for the self, the family and the community. It also entails accepting one's responsibility as Fate has decreed it. Industriousness means taking pride in one's everyday work and all of the tasks that are completed.

Perseverance: is akin to both Courage and Discipline. It means being willing of accepting one's Fate and accomplishing one's goals and handle ones responsibilities in an Honorable manner regardless of fears, barriers or failures. It means accepting these hindrances as steps in our own growth and eventually accomplishing our goals.

Self Reliance: is the desire and drive to provide for oneself. This means working on one's blockages when it comes to self esteem and accepting Fate. It means moving beyond one's past failures and indeed, the ego. Self Reliance also means taking responsibility for one's own actions/non-actions and duties. This means that there are no excuses, only the tasks at hand and the responsibility needed to complete them.

Truth: great epitome of all things. It means having the courage to accept the truth when truth is presented. It means taking down the barriers that might hinder one from seeing the truth, the horse blinders that we put up to make ourselves comfortable, if you will. Truth means accepting the reality of our situations everyday. It also means facing the challenges of said reality. On a more secular note it means doing and speaking no falsehood and walking honorably through life.

Young Hornie Steals Fire

by Steven W. Posch

They say that long ago old Hornie
(but of course he was young Hornie then)
wanted fire to give the people,
but fire was Thunder's and he wouldn't share it.
Well, it so happens that Thunder had wanted
Hornie's pretty little tail for quite some time,
but he just wouldn't give in.
So now he goes to him and says,
"Okay, I've changed my mind,
but first let's have a couple of drinks,
'cause this is my first time
and you're some big
and I want to get loosed up good."
So Thunder gets all hot and bothered
and pours those drinks
with a pretty heavy hand, I can tell you.
Young Hornie keeps on saying,
"Let's have another one, I'm not ready yet,"
until at last old Thunder's had so much
he just plain passed out cold.
That's how young Hornie managed to steal the fire
that Thunder wanted to keep all to himself.
They say he hid it in an oak, the little shit,
which of course is Thunder's tree,
and that's why we make
our fire-drills from oak, the wood
with fire from heaven at its heart.
Guess who woke up next morning
in some kind of mood,
hung over, outsmarted, and unladen?
But Hornie was happy and danced all day
because he'd managed both to get that fire
and keep his little butt unscrewed,
for then, at least.
Anyway, that's how they tell it.

You know how
those church people always say
that their god died for them?
Well, the way I see it is, dying's easy:
mine gave tail for me.

The Road less Travelled

By Peter Paddon

There is a phenomenon that affects all Traditional Crafters from time to time. They can be in a crown, at a Pagan event, even surrounded by their fellow coveners, and suddenly it hits... an aching, gut-wrenching sense of despair and loneliness. Without warning, they feel isolated, insulated from the people around them, separated by a yawning chasm of “difference”. And then just as suddenly, it is gone, leaving a strange echoing emptiness in the pit of their stomach, a lingering trace faint but ever present. This is the moment when they realize the truth of that other name for the journey through Traditional Witchcraft – the Path of the Outcast.

Everyone is familiar with the myth of the Cunningman or Wise Woman, living on the edge of the village, part medicine maker, part shunned weirdo, and there is often an assumption that the term applies to this physical, historical situation. In modern times, Crafters live a life more or less integrated with the rest of society. We hold down jobs, go to bars, drive cars and take vacations, and the image of the smelly old hag on the edge of the village is a far cry from the elegant – if somewhat gothic – and beautiful people that we see attending public rituals and workshops.

But for the serious Crafter, even when surrounded by family, friends and fellow Crafters, the Path of the Outcast is an apt description for them. For no matter how involved we are in our community, how often we attend coven rites and classes, the simple truth is that we walk our Path alone. Even the initiates of a thriving coven are merely solitary travellers sharing the same narrow track for a time. And sometimes, especially right before a significant ritual or experience, that feeling of despair comes welling up to remind us that we are, in fact, quite alone.

Some people find it difficult to grasp the concept of being alone in a crowd – until they experience it for themselves. And I think experience is the key. A large part of why we feel this way is that we have experiences that can't really be shared with anyone who hasn't “been there” for themselves, experiences that we struggle – and often fail – to find adequate words to describe. Non-Pagan friends will just think we've gone crazy if we even try to explain, and even the Pagan-friendly ones or friends on other Pagan paths may not truly understand. Our oath is tailored by us to suit our needs, so even when we're in a coven or group, it is still a bunch of individuals who happen to be traveling in the same direction for a while each with a slightly different perspective, and so a slightly different set of experiences.

There are Magickal reasons why this should be so. Most people who practice a Pagan belief system at the very least work with meditation and altered states of consciousness. Those of us who follow a magical path add to this mixture other practices, such as walking between the worlds, astral travel, and other ways of actively exploring the realms. An old term for people who did this was hedge-walker, or hedge-hopper. Until fairly recently – last 150

years or so – movement from place to place was very restricted for common folk. Only the gentry, tinkers, and craftsmen could travel from place to place without permission from the Lord of the Manor. Craftsmen included healers, cunningfolk, and the like. Magickal folk live, literally or figuratively, on the outskirts of society. Many find it hard to relate to non-magickal folk from the start, and as they get deeper into their studies, they find this difficulty becomes more pronounced. I can safely say that aside from the occasional work colleague, all of my friendships and relationships in my adult life have been with other practitioners – I have never even considered dating a non-magickal person. While I interact with many people in my working life, I always feel like I am somehow insulated from them, because I have seen and experienced things that they would never understand – and they'd probably run screaming (or be calling for psychiatric help for me) if they knew about it.

So, after painting such a rosy picture of the life of a Crtafter, what are the benefits? Why would we be willing to deal with such harrowing effects? Well, luckily, there is a pay-off. The Path has its own rewards, and those called to walk it are generally predisposed to handle its peculiarities. Someone drawn to this path usually has a voracious appetite for learning, and it is easier to indulge this in solitude. Those of us who are part of a thriving Pagan community appreciate the gathering of like-minded folk, but we will take ourselves away from time to time, to work with the solitude – we can have too much even of our own people...

Those who are initiated into a tradition are “twice-born”. They are set apart in much the same way the Chosen People, the Hebrews, considered themselves to be set apart. This automatically puts up a barrier between us and mundane folk, which is why we begin to mix only with those who are like us. Besides, as we become more deeply involved, our beliefs, our values and our ideas of good conduct change, and suddenly an evening swilling beer and watching sports just doesn't cut it any more.

Unfortunately, this is a subject not often spoken about, even by those who experience it, so people going through it for the first time often find themselves without a frame of reference. They decide that because they are feeling like an outsider, that they don't belong on the path, and leave it to seek where they do belong. The trouble is, if you do belong on this path, and walk away from it, not only will you carry the isolation and ‘apartness’ with you, but you will also add to that the stresses and trauma of not being true to yourself. That's why I decided to write about this subject, in the hopes that those of you who are experiencing this side of the path will recognize it for what it is, the calling to walk between worlds, to mediate as priesthood, to become the Wise Woman or Cunning Man. The knowledge of why you feel this way won't stop you feeling it, but you can draw ironic comfort in the fact that you are not alone in your isolation, that every true Witch feels it. It ebbs and flows – sometimes you feel it more than other times. But remember, it is part of the Mark of the Witch, and it is the coin you pay in exchange for the amazing experiences you have between the worlds – yes, those same experiences that you just can't share with any but a select few...

Belladonna Ride

by Marilyn "Istari" R.

In silence you beckon
Dark dreams to behold
For the brave and very bold

Witch-rider in night's shade
Stryx blackened eyes
Enchanters surprise

Beneath a thinly veiled moon
Such travels-wild
Haunted Otherworldly child

Belladonna with Mandrake
Whisper your name
As moth to a flame

Forbidden emerald potion
Your broom takes flight
Like a comet into night...

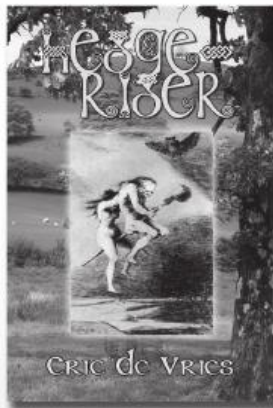
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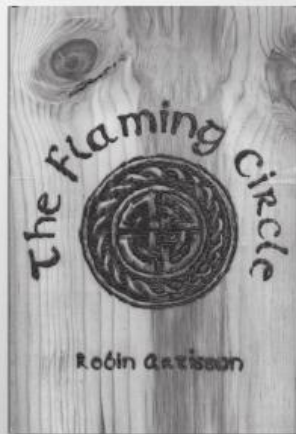
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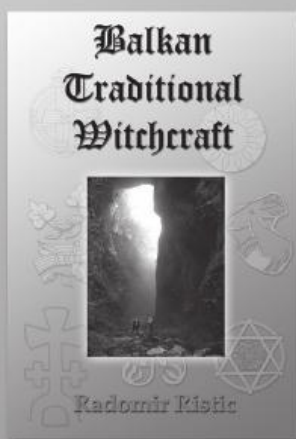
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This book is published in English for the first time. It is a compilation of history data, anthropological writings about witches on the Balkan and author's discoveries and interviews with them. It has theoretical and practical parts and gives complete system of Balkan Craft. The system is divided to smaller elements and any element is theoretically described with giving the examples of practices. Balkan traditional witchcraft is an old system from shamanistic time that has managed to survive till today. As a system it can be applied in any culture, state or region in the world.

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